On Such a Full Sea
John MacGillivray (1821-1867)

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the Australian National University.

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This thesis is the original work of the author.

Acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used.

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Sophie Jensen

BRIT. MUS. TYPE
Chlamydera cerviniventris Gould Jardine Cont. Orn. 1850 p. (154) 106
Collected by J. MacGillivray at Cape York
N. Australia
Type of species
dera cerviniventris Gould.
Cape York coll. J. Macgillivray
2

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Abstract

This thesis examines the life of the naturalist and collector John MacGillivray (1821-1867). MacGillivray's name is woven through the narratives and accounts of nineteenth century collecting and exploration in Australia. His presence as a private collector for the Earl of Derby on board HMS *Fly* (1842-1846) and official naturalist aboard HMS *Rattlesnake* (1846-1850) and HMS *Herald* (1852-1855), mean that few could have rivalled his levels of knowledge and experience as a collector and ethnographer of Australian and Pacific material in the mid nineteenth century.

Despite his presence on these three key voyages; despite his energy as a collector of birds, eggs, language, ethnographic material, plants, shells and animals; despite his collections being held in museums throughout Australia and England; despite his highly-regarded two-volume account of the voyage of the *Rattlesnake*; a full account of MacGillivray's life has never been written.

The reasons for MacGillivray's neglect revolve around his dismissal, in disgrace, from HMS *Herald* in 1855. With reputation in tatters and career within the official scientific institutions and networks in Britain effectively over, he disappeared from the records and slipped quietly into anonymity. This thesis reveals that MacGillivray's career was far from over. His final twelve years are examined for the first time, detailing the life of a talented freelance collector and adventurer in Australia and the south-west Pacific.

MacGillivray's misfortune led him into rich territory both for himself and for his biographer. His disreputable wanderings led him into the seedy world of sandalwood collecting, the flourishing missions of the south-west Pacific, the complex trading networks along the Australian coastline and throughout the Torres Strait and the burgeoning scientific scene in New South Wales. His activities on the fringes of the British Empire placed him, both physically and conceptually, within the complex and contested space of the colonial frontier.

Charting this new territory has required sources not previously used. The discovery of articles written by MacGillivray for the Sydney Press sheds new light on him and his environment. Journals documenting his life on board the trading vessel *Julia Percy* provide insight to his most intriguing and certainly most dangerous period.

While it is argued that MacGillivray's life warrants more attention than it has previously been given, this thesis does not aim to establish MacGillivray as a model of scientific achievement or of solid character. It is in his failings that he serves best as a lens through which the social and scientific spheres he inhabited can be examined. He was a man of ability, not necessarily originality. He was intelligent and knowledgeable without being brilliant. His inability to break free of the systems of natural history thought and collecting that had shaped his career constrained him to a marginal role in the great scientific developments that surrounded him. Nonetheless this examination of his life makes a significant contribution to understanding the life of a collector during the 1850s and 1860s, to our understanding of life on colonial frontiers and the workings of the British Empire, along and within, these marginal spaces.

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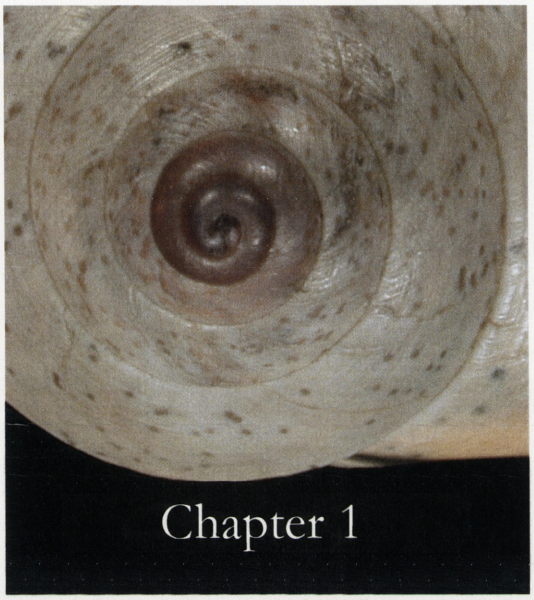

Chapter 1

A reef, a rodent and a bluff

The Barrier Reef

Stretching along much of the northern reaches of the east coast of Australia and northward toward the Torres Strait and New Guinea is a massive coral reef. The reef is a defining element of the Australian coast. A barrier in more ways than one, it was seen by European explorers and settlers throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a serious impediment to travel, navigation and colonisation. A threat to shipping and life that needed to be charted, understood, conquered. Some of those travellers who came to play their part in conquering this barrier discovered another side to the reef. For these people the reef was an intriguing environment teeming with life. The corals themselves, the birds, fish and mammals were unlike any they had encountered elsewhere. The successful charting, and therefore perceived conquest, of the reef led to the discovery of a complex environmental system of great beauty and diversity. More recent researchers and travellers have come to realise that the reef is also an environment of great fragility. From being a feature to conquer it has become a system in desperate need of understanding and protection. Environmental issues such as climate change and associated issues of sea level rise, acidification and extreme weather events have made the barrier reef one of those areas under most severe threat – and along with the reef itself, the many forms of unique life that it harbours. Researchers are now looking back to those travellers who were the first to appreciate the richness of the region in order to better understand the reef systems and how they have developed and changed. The role played by the naturalists and travellers who traversed the reef in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is becoming an area of increasing importance and relevance.

Some of these travellers are well known, their observations and lives well recorded. In many cases their names still pepper the maps of the area. However many left little or no trace of their time on the reef. Some, of course, fall between these two extremes, and among them are people whose lives and experiences may provide new insight into the development of our knowledge and understanding of the region.

A rodent

At the northern extent of the Great Barrier Reef, high in the Coral Sea, there lies a tiny strip of sand called Bramble Cay. Measuring only 340m long by 150m wide, the Cay is a remnant of the land bridge which once joined New Guinea to the Australian mainland.

The Cay is fragile. Its future is doubtful. Waves and storms are gradually eroding it, and one day it seems likely it will simply disappear.

On this tiny strip of sand in the Coral Sea a small mammal is struggling for survival. As the sea claims their only home, around ninety-four Bramble Cay Melomys (*Melomys rubicola*) cling to life.[1] One major storm or environmental event would be enough to wipe the species out of existence.[2] A scholarly account of its description and discovery is clinical and perfunctory:

> Bramble Cay Melomys
> *Melomys rubicola*
>
> *Distribution.* - Bramble Cay, a low-lying islet east of Daru, Papua, marking the apex of the Australian territorial boundary.
> *Notes.* – A large species, about the size of *cervinipes* from which it is distinguished by its extremely long and coarsely scaled tail, which exceeds the combined head and body length by more than an inch, and has the appearance of a coarse file. The coat is also coarser and darker above than in *cervinipes*, with a rich ochraceous tinge on the rump; the hands and feet are whitish instead of fawn. The original specimen was collected by John MacGillivray in May 1845, during the voyage of the *Fly*, and presented to the British Museum by the Earl of Derby.[3]

In August 1845 a young naturalist and collector, John MacGillivray, then working as a private collector on behalf of the Earl of Derby on board HMS *Fly*, wrote eagerly to John Gray at the British Museum of a 'beautiful little rat' he had recently discovered on the low sandy islet which is Bramble Cay.[4] MacGillivray investigated a neatly made nest from which two of the little native rodents jumped – an adult female and a juvenile. Two dogs, which were landed by the party, killed many of the little creatures before MacGillivray captured his own specimens - specimens that would eventually reside over 10,000 nautical miles away in the storerooms of the British Museum. 'If new', MacGillivray wrote hopefully, 'Mr Gray would oblige me much by naming it in honour of Capt Blackwood as I am anxious to express a sense of many obligations by which I am indebted to him'.[5]

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[1] Steven Van Dyck, Steve & Strahan, Ronald (eds), *The Mammals of Australia* (Third Edition) (Chatswood: Reed New Holland, 2008), 673. Population estimate from 1998.

[2] Bramble cay melomys, Queensland Government, Environment and Resource Management. http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/wildlifeecosystems/wildlife/threatened_plants_and_animals/endangered/bramble_cay_melomys.html (accessed 22 May 2010).

[3] Ellis Troughton, *Furred animals of Australia* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1948), 326.

[4] MacGillivray to Gray, 13-18 August 1845, British Museum (Natural History). Dept. of Zoology, Keeper of Zoology Archives Df300-299. Australia and New Zealand References M2599-2610, 1837-1969. Australian Joint Copying Project, National Library of Australia and State Library of New South Wales. Canberra: Australian Joint Copying Project, microform, Foreign letters, reel 2603, f.222-225.

[5] *Ibid*

The melomys was given the species name rubicola (*Melomys rubicola*) Latin for "bramble like". Bramble Cay was in fact named for the *Fly*'s tender, HMS *Bramble*. It is unknown whether the naming of the rodent was a rather cryptic reference to this vessel or a mistaken assumption that the Cay was named for its vegetation. Whatever the case, MacGillivray's wish to gratefully honour his Captain was not granted.

A bluff

Nine years later the same John MacGillivray sailed on board another Royal Navy survey vessel, HMS *Herald*. In order to commemorate the visit in 1854 of the *Herald* to Raoul Island, the northernmost island in the Kermadec Island group, the ship's Captain Henry Mangles Denham chose to name various features of the island after a number of his officers and fellow travellers. The newly bestowed names included Rayner Point, Milne Islets, Parsons Rock and MacGillivray Bluff. Seven years later in 1861 when Denham's charts arrived at the Admiralty in London, one name had been erased – MacGillivray Bluff had disappeared, to be replaced by Fleetwood Bluff – renamed in honour of Denham's son.[6]

The naming of places and species was a complex and often fraught process. Those wielding the power of bestowing names ensured that in so doing debts were repaid, heroes and patrons were honoured and hard work rewarded. As can be seen in the case of MacGillivray bluff, naming was also a way in which hatreds, revenge and personal politics could play out. Naming was a form of immortality – a small reminder of discovery and adventure. As vessels and their crews sailed, explored, documented and discovered, they named. As well as animals, they gave their names to mountains, hills, rivers, bluffs, islands, passages, openings, capes and reefs. The landscape throughout Australia and the Pacific is littered with the names of these voyagers. As well as their own names, the map reads as an account of their fortunes and misfortunes, as events and opportunities were also inscribed on the landscape. When combined with the names given to the animals, marine and land based, that inhabit these areas, a fascinating map is assembled - a map of exploration, adventure and discovery.

A name on a map, now gone. A small animal on a thin strip of sand in the Coral Sea, under threat. Two fragments of a life that is in danger of disappearing. The stories of the rodent and the bluff both highlight the power of naming and the fragility of the past. In many ways the disappearance of MacGillivray Bluff captures far more about the life of John MacGillivray than had it remained as a commemoration of his visit. The ghostly presence of MacGillivray Bluff reflects a life overwritten by the reputation and achievements of this particular traveller's contemporaries as well as marking the shifting fortunes of MacGillivray's life and the way in which these fortunes shaped the fragments left behind. Before another fragment, the Bramble Cay Melomys, also disappears, it is time that more of MacGillivray's past is recovered and pieced together to record a life worthy of further attention.

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[6] Andrew David, *The Voyage of HMS Herald / to Australia and the South-west Pacific 1852-1861 under the command of Captain Henry Mangles Denham* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press at the Miegunyah Press, 1995), 76.

This thesis examines the life of the naturalist and collector John MacGillivray (1821-1867). MacGillivray's name is woven through the narratives and accounts of nineteenth century collecting and exploration in Australia. His presence as a private collector for the Earl of Derby on board HMS *Fly* (1842-1846) and official naturalist aboard HMS *Rattlesnake* (1846-1850) and HMS *Herald* (1852-1855), combined with his career in Australia, New Caledonia and Vanuatu as a private collector, mean that few could rival his levels of knowledge and experience as a collector and ethnographer of Australian and Pacific material in the mid nineteenth century.

Despite his presence on these three key voyages; despite his energy and enthusiasm as a collector of birds, eggs, language, ethnographic material, plants, shells and animals; despite his collections being held in museums throughout Australia and England; despite his highly regarded and engrossing two-volume account of the voyage of the *Rattlesnake*; despite his journals being the best account of the first years of the voyage of the *Herald,* a full account of MacGillivray's life has never been written.

That said, MacGillivray is by no means an unknown or invisible figure. In the existing accounts of the three Royal Navy voyages in which he participated, his name features prominently and his letters and journals are relied upon as vital source material.[7] MacGillivray is however never treated as a major figure of interest. Is MacGillivray therefore significant enough to bring onto centre stage? Does his life warrant a more rigorous examination? In his analysis of writing a biography of a 'minor life', Geoffrey

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[7] No major secondary work has been written about the voyage of HMS *Fly*. The official narrative of the voyage was written by the naturalist Jospeh Beete Jukes. J.B. Jukes, *Narrative of the surveying voyage of H.M. S. Fly : commanded by Captain F. P. Blackwood, R.N., in Torres Strait, New Guinea, and other islands of the Eastern Archipelago, during the year 1842-1846: together with an excursion into the interior of the eastern part of Java* (London: T&W Boone, 1847). The most recent publication examining the voyage of the *Rattlesnake* is Jordon Goodman, *The Rattlesnake: A Voyage of Discovery to the Coral Sea* (London: Faber & Faber, 2005). The voyage of HMS *Herald* has been documented by Andrew David, *The Voyage of HMS Herald.*

Wolff quotes a reviewer who stated of his work 'What then is the point of inflating an interesting footnote to the dimensions of a sizable book?'[8] In writing a biographical study of MacGillivray, am I inflating his significance to suit my own purposes or interests? I believe not. I believe there are three major reasons behind MacGillivray's apparent neglect and that these causes in themselves are enlightening and warrant the closer examination of his life.

Perhaps the most overwhelming reason for MacGillivray's neglect is his status as a failure. Where his contemporaries bettered themselves through their pursuit of natural history, MacGillivray was effectively ruined. The nature of MacGillivray's departure from the official networks and societies, his disgrace, his supposed downfall, have meant that he has become a figure of derision. Had he fallen in action as did his contemporary collectors John Gilbert and Frederick Strange, or lived productively and happily, as did his *Rattlesnake* shipmate Thomas Huxley, his achievements would be better remembered. Instead MacGillivray is written off as an alcoholic, a hopeless case - someone who squandered his opportunities and wasted his potential. In 1867 MacGillivray died poor and alone in a cheap Sydney hostel. His death certificate recorded 'mother and father unknown'.[9] In his biography of Huxley, Adrian Desmond described MacGillivray – somewhat unfairly - as ending up a 'drunken hobo'.[10] It is this that has remained the enduring image of his life and career. In fact, after his dismissal from HMS *Herald* in 1855, his collecting career continued for a further twelve years. These years are often disregarded or overlooked. J.H. Calaby records in his entry on MacGillivray for the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* that 'there is a tradition among Australian naturalists that his career "ended on a low rung"'.[11] While in no way seeking to swing the pendulum firmly the other way and paint too rosy a picture of the man, this thesis accords the final twelve years of MacGillivray's life the attention they merit as an important part of his life and career. In so doing it will make a significant addition to existing knowledge regarding MacGillivray's life, to the understanding of the life of a collector in Australia and the Pacific during the 1850s and 1860s and to our understanding of life on colonial frontiers.

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[8] Geoffrey Wolff, 'Minor Lives' in Marc Pachter (ed), *Telling lives: the biographer's art* (Washington: New Republic Books, 1979), 58.

[9] Robert Ralph, 'John MacGillivray: His life and work', *Archives of Natural History*, 20 (1993): 193.

[10] Adrian Desmond, *Huxley: the Devil's disciple* (London: Michael Joseph, 1994), 376.

[11] J.H. Calaby, 'MacGillivray, John (1821-1867)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography Online*, http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A020144b.htm?hilite=macgillivray (accessed 2 August 2010).

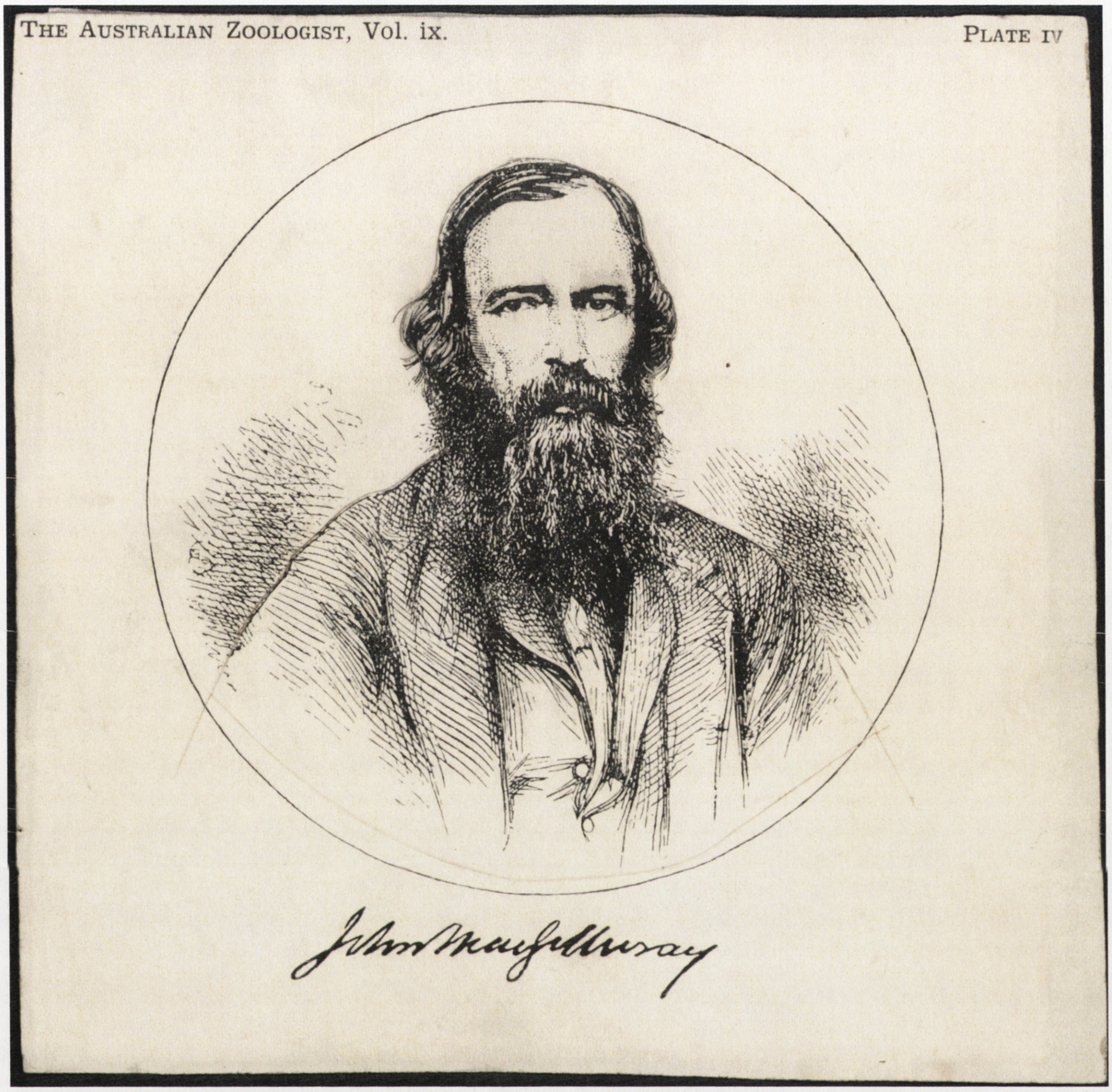
THE AUSTRALIAN ZOOLOGIST, Vol. ix.
PLATE IV
John MacGillivray

Plate 1: John MacGillivray
The only known picture of John MacGillivray. The picture accompanied his brother-in-law's article on his life 'A Martyr to Science'.
('Good Words', 1868. National Library of Australia)

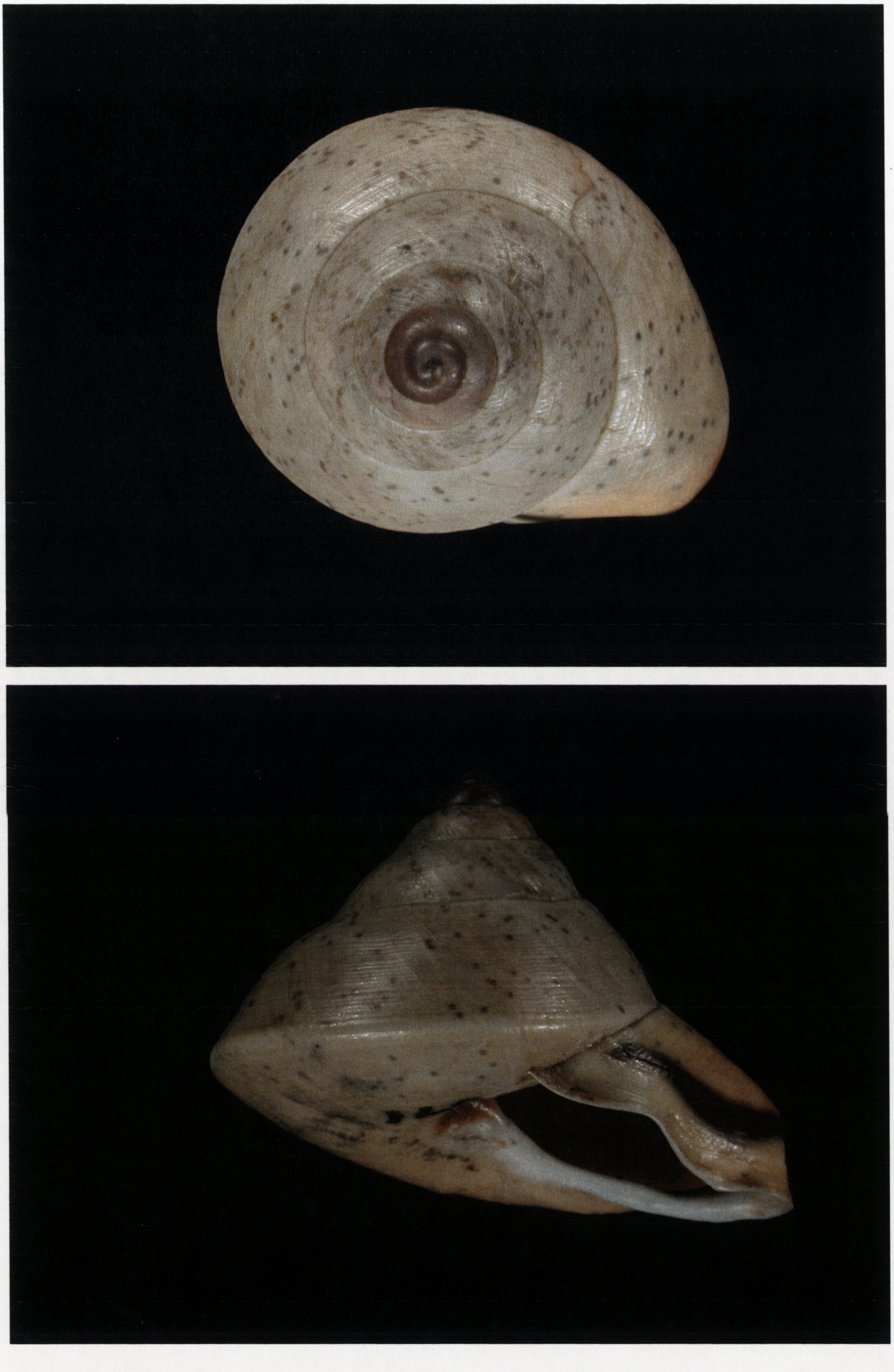

Plate 2: *Rhynchotrochus macgillivrayi*
First collected by MacGillivray on the voyage of HMS *Rattlesnake*. Described and named in MacGillivray's honour by Forbes in 1851.
(Photo: H Barlow. Australian Museum)

The second reason for MacGillivray's neglect revolves around the concentration historians of science have placed on MacGillivray's contemporaries. MacGillivray's patrons, companions and competitors rate as some of the most significant figures in the history of the development of the natural sciences in the nineteenth century. Their contributions and careers have formed the basis of numerous studies – these include people such as Thomas Henry Huxley, Sir William Hooker and his son Joseph Dalton Hooker, John Gould and Edward Forbes. MacGillivray was overshadowed by geologist Joseph Beete Jukes on board the *Fly*, by Huxley on board the *Rattlesnake*, and by his own disgrace on board HMS *Herald*. MacGillivray's story has been peripheral to these distinguished individuals and as such has only been examined within the context of their, far more impressive, achievements. The biographies of these individuals are numerous and have tended to use the careers of these prominent and successful figures as a way of locating the development of the sciences culturally.[12]

The last factor in MacGillivray's neglect is closely related to the second. MacGillivray's contributions to science are of a different nature to those of his contemporaries listed above. He was not a great theorist. The work and ideas of many of his contemporaries were crucial in the debates and development of Darwinian ideas in Britain and abroad. MacGillivray, in contrast, did not publish widely in scientific journals and did not contribute in any significant way to the intellectual debates and discussions surrounding, and in many cases stimulated by, the collections he amassed.[13] MacGillivray remained primarily a collector, observer and documenter. Largely because of this the value an analysis of his life could make on other fronts has been ignored.

As with the reasons for his neglect, the value and significance of a study of MacGillivray's career is threefold. The first has already been noted in terms of his contribution to the history and understanding of Australia's natural environment, in particular the Great Barrier Reef. Two other key reasons for the value of this study remain. The first is the insight that MacGillivray's life offers into the history of natural history, collecting and science. Overlapping and intertwining with this story is the way in which MacGillivray's life is a useful study of the history of British imperial expansion in Australia and the Pacific. In their analysis of the phenomena they term 'Imperial careering'. David Lambert and Alan Lester state that:

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[12] Terrall, Mary, 'Biography as Cultural History of Science', *Isis*, 97, 2 (2006): 313.

[13] Calaby's entry in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* notes that 'Except for the *Rattlesnake* narrative his published work is essentially trivial, and it is surprising that he did not publish more substantial zoological papers and describe some of the new species which he discovered.'

> … imperial careers are worthy of further study not necessarily because imperial careerists' own comparative insights give us a more objective view of colonial relations, but because their life histories – indeed, their life geographies – constituted meaningful connections across the empire in their own right. And these connections were one kind among many which facilitated the continual reformulation of imperial discourses, practices and culture.[14]

MacGillivray's entire career was shaped by the development of the British Empire, the structures it created and the way in which it impacted on various populations and individuals – both indigenous and immigrant. In this respect MacGillivray's life can be viewed as a life lived on the frontier – a rich area for further analysis.

One of the most significant things that a closer examination of MacGillivray's work offers is a real insight into the working life of a collector: the hardships endured, the equipment required, the techniques employed, the underlying methodology at work and, ultimately, the possible pitfalls involved. In order to fully appreciate the history and significance of the collections that collectors such as MacGillivray amassed, this aspect of the work requires more thorough analysis and documentation. MacGillivray is the ideal subject for such a study for several reasons. Even his detractors admit that his collecting skills were of the highest order. Another reason is that the breadth of his collections open up a far wider field for research than those who specialised in particular areas.

A further important reason making MacGillivray an ideal study of collecting is that he writes intelligently and often in great detail about the day-to-day operations of a collector. His writings paint a far fuller picture of the real difficulties and hardships faced by a collector as well as the joys that the occupation could bring. Every new day brought a new challenge as a couple of brief examples illustrate. A small note contained in his natural history notebook for the years 1855-1866 reads, 'Mix depurated nitre with 1/8 of transparent (oriental) sulphur and make into a small ball. One of these placed on the tongue and allowed slowly to dissolve in the mouth has been found to alleviate the effects of continued thirst'.[15] In a letter to Edward Pearson Ramsay he thanked him for sending a copy of Gould's *Handbook* but stated that:

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[14] David Lambert and Alan Lester, 'Imperial spaces, imperial subjects', in Lambert and Lester (eds), *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 2.

[15] John MacGillivray, *Natural History Notebook 1855-66*, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, ML B944.

> I took it to bed with me last night and, having in vain tried to sleep, being very unwell, I read it right through, finishing about daybreak, when the jackasses were beginning. The number of new names is positively alarming, especially those of the New Genera, and I don't know that I shall ever master them.[16]

An occupation that at times requires both studying through the night and the ability to cope with extreme thirst is not an easy one. Being a collector during this period meant having the ability to deal with real physical hardship and deprivation as well as considerable intelligence. It is these shared, often intimate details given by MacGillivray, which give such rare glimpses into an occupation that also required real skill, knowledge and determination in order to succeed.

The last, and perhaps most significant reason that MacGillivray's life is such an ideal study of a collector is that the different phases in MacGillivray's career represent three different classes or types of collector – those employed by a private patron, those employed by government or other official institutions and finally those who worked as free agents, selling to a range of parties as opportunities arose.

The collections gathered by MacGillivray and sent back for consumption, in terms of description and analysis back in England, consisted of *specimens.* As Anne Larsen argues in her analysis of equipment used by naturalists, it must be recognised that natural history specimens are not, in themselves, natural. These objects are a product that has been produced by a process of collection and preservation by a naturalist.[17] Their shape and form has been determined by the skill, restrictions, limitations and opportunities faced by the collectors as outlined above. These items should therefore be considered as artefacts.[18] Some work has been undertaken regarding the physical work of collecting on board Royal Navy vessels. One of the most valuable of these is Huxley's own *Science at Sea.*[19] Other valuable studies have been made about the significance of fieldwork to the careers and ideas of particular figures.[20] However, a full analysis of the work of a single collector, throughout all stages of a career as diverse as MacGillivray's, has yet to be undertaken. The value in such an analysis reflects the increasing interest in the practical aspects of nineteenth century natural history; the way in which these physical and practical realities influenced what was collected and the way in which these collections have then gone on to influence various aspects of scientific thought and development.[21]

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[16] MacGillivray to Ramsey, 1 July – 21 July 1865, E.P. Ramsay - papers, being mainly correspondence relating to natural history, 1860-1912, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, MLMSS 563/3, microfilm CY2321.

[17] Anne Larsen, 'Equipment for the Field', in Jardine, N., Secord, J.A. and Spary, E.C. (eds), *Cultures of Natural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 358. See also Jim Endersby, *Imperial Nature: Joseph Hooker and the Practices of Victorian Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 55.

[18] For a discussion of this concept see Samuel J.M.M Alberti, 'Constructing nature behind glass', *museum and society*, 6, 2 (2008): 74.

[19] T.H Huxley, 'Science at Sea', *Westminster Review*, 61 (1854): 98-119. See also Ian Wilkins, 'Scientists at Sea: British Seagoing Naturalists in Australian Waters in the Nineteenth Century', *International Journal of Maritime History*, Vol. XIII, no.1 (2001): 95-113.

[20] For example see the special issue of *Osiris*, 2nd series, 11 (1996) dedicated to Science in the field. In particular see Jane Camerini, 'Wallace in the field', *Osiris*, 2nd series, 11 (1996): 44-65.

The second significant opportunity that an analysis of MacGillivray's career affords is his ability to shed light on the development of the British and French Empires in the Pacific. His experiences both while on board British surveying vessels and building his career as a private trader depended on the networks and structures developed as a part of British colonial expansion and consolidation. MacGillivray's career allows for an analysis of elements of colonial exploration, exploitation, contact and assimilation. In particular MacGillivray's colonial experience makes a valuable contribution to studies of colonial frontiers.

A study of John MacGillivray's life also allows us to consider Australia's frontier history more broadly. As a constant wanderer on the fringes of the British Empire, large portions of MacGillivray's career took place in this hotly contested and complex space. By charting and analysing MacGillivray's frontier encounters, particularly in Australia, it is possible to make a valuable contribution to the debates surrounding the place, meaning and complexity of the concept of the frontier in colonial history.

The concept of the frontier, first applied in an American context, has long been a part of colonial historiography.[22] In her study comparing frontier perspectives between Australia and Canada, Elizabeth Furness writes:

> The idea of the frontier reflects a uniquely colonial view of a place and process of encounter between colonising people, indigenous inhabitants, and natural landscapes.[23]

Whether it be a physical space or an abstract concept the 'frontier' has been seen as a place of contact between people, typically, between settlers and indigenous populations. The contact took many forms – it was at times fleeting, at other times sustained. It was both violent and peaceful. The frontier was a place of discovery and adventure, of surprises and intrigue. The frontier was a place in which power relationships were unpredictable and were often radically different from those experienced elsewhere within the country.[24] The frontier has added significance as the encounters which took place there have played a crucial part in shaping the histories and identities of colonial nations.[25] From an historical perspective the frontier is therefore complex, dynamic and fascinating.

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[21] Jane Camerini, 'Remains of the Day: Early Victorians in the Field' in Bernard Lightman (ed), *Victorian Science in Context* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 354.

[22] It is commonly given as originating as a concept of colonial history by Frederick Jackson Turner in 1893 in reference to the American frontier.

[23] Elizabeth Furness, 'Imagining the frontier: comparative perspectives from Canada and Australia', in Deborah Bird Rose and Richard Davis (eds), *Dislocating the frontier: Essaying the mystique of the outback* (Canberra: ANU E Press, Australian National University, 2005), 23.

The frontier has been explored, defined and redefined by historians in an attempt to better understand the processes at work and the way in which encounters took place.[26] In Australia these ideas have re-emerged at the centre of controversies surrounding the issue of violence and resistance associated with European settlement – a debate dubbed 'the history wars'.[27] Partly as a consequence of this controversy the concept of frontier has been subject to considerable attention by numerous historians. The term itself has been opened up to scrutiny while events and encounters occurring within its compass have been re-examined in order to understand how the 'frontier' operated.[28] A facet of this debate, which is closely aligned to the issue of resistance, has been the extent and influence of indigenous agency.[29] Early histories of Australian settlement portrayed Aboriginal people as passive and helpless in the face of colonisation.[30] Further research and analysis has demonstrated that indigenous populations had a far more complex response to their colonisers than had been previously acknowledged.

Within the context of these recent debates MacGillivray's experiences take on particular significance. A recurring theme woven throughout MacGillivray's entire career is the way in which his life and livelihood often depended on or was affected by his ability to interact with various indigenous populations throughout Australia and the Pacific. MacGillivray's encounters and interactions offer a glimpse into the different kinds of relationships formed between visitors and indigenous populations during this crucial period in frontier history. Taken together, MacGillivray's experiences offer a unique perspective on Australian frontier history over a twenty year period from the 1840s until the 1860s.

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[24] Richard Davis, 'Introduction: transforming the frontier in contemporary Australia' in Rose and Davis (eds), *Dislocating the frontier*, 9.

[25] *Ibid*, 7.

[26] Two of the most influential works are C.D. Rowley, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1972) and Henry Reynolds, *The other side of the frontier, Aboriginal resistance to the European invasion of Australia* (Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1982). For a detailed examination of the development of frontier studies see Bain Attwood and S.G. Foster, 'Introduction' in Bain Attwood and S.G. Foster (eds), *Frontier Conflict: The Australian Experience* (Canberra: National Museum of Australia, 2003), 4.

[27] For summary of this controversy see Attwood and Foster, 'Introduction' in *Frontier Conflict*, 1-30.

[28] Rose and Davis (eds), *Dislocating the frontier* and Lynette Russell (ed), *Colonial Frontiers: Encounters: Indigenous-European encounters in settler societies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001). For a detailed discussion of Turner's frontier thesis see Elizabeth Furness, 'Imagining the frontier: comparative perspectives from Canada and Australia', in Rose and Davis (eds), *Dislocating the frontier*, 23-46. For a discussion on the way in which Turner's ideas influenced frontier studies in Australia see Richard Davis, 'Introduction: transforming the frontier in contemporary Australia' in Rose and Davis (eds), *Dislocating the frontier*, 12.

[29] Geoffrey Bolton, 'Reflections on comparative frontier history' in Attwood and Foster (eds), *Frontier Conflict*, 162.

[30] Henry Reynolds, *The other side of the frontier*, 199.

An analysis of MacGillivray's life on the frontier can occur on a number of levels. On one level he can be seen as typical of one of the many visitors of the period who were brought into contact with indigenous populations as they explored and studied regions on the fringes of the British Empire. These visitors were numerous. They included individuals representing various governments as well as private enterprise, each pursuing their own goals, be it exploring the region, surveying the country or seeking to exploit resources – or, in most cases, all three. No matter what auspices these visitors arrived under, what they had in common with regard to their interactions with local populations, was that maintaining good relations with the local populations helped them to achieve their goals. Local inhabitants became mediators between visitors and the new, often very alien, environments. This was certainly true for MacGillivray whose particular field of work relied heavily on local knowledge of plants, animals and resources.

A number of factors distinguish MacGillivray from other visitors in terms of his interaction with indigenous populations and make his life particularly significant to the history of encounters on the frontier. The first is that his life provides an interesting view of the evolution of more complex relationships as, unlike so many visitors who came, saw, studied, plundered and departed, MacGillivray's interactions took place over a number of years and in quite varied situations. Of particular interest is the way in which MacGillivray's experiences and attitudes altered and evolved along with his status in particular situations and locations. As we will see MacGillivray was, at various times, a visitor, collaborator, student, observer, friend, middleman, employer and resident. In each of these guises his role and attitudes shifted, at times subtly, as his interests, mode of operation and status altered. It is interesting to note these changes as MacGillivray's story unfolds and to attempt to document the way in which they changed both his attitudes and the attitudes of others towards him.

Another factor, which makes MacGillivray's life of particular interest in the area of frontier history, is his occupation. Frontier histories have tended to focus on settlers and the associated issues of land use and tenure. MacGillivray's occupation as a collector and naturalist opens up a different sort of frontier – that of science. In her analysis of scientific frontiers, environmental historian Libby Robin argues that:

> The difficulty for scientists working in Queensland was, perhaps, to make it clear that their task was different from that of frontier-adventurers, morally more worthy and more important to the glory of empire.[31]

This attitude is clearly evident in MacGillivray's writings. His goals relate to the furthering of knowledge and the documentation of new people, territory and environments. Even later in his career when operating on a private basis this moral undertone is present in the way in which he describes his dealings on the frontier. As well as this, the process of collecting itself can be a key way in which to view frontier life. In his analysis of frontier objects Philip Jones states that:

> Most collectors scarcely brushed against the lives of their subjects. But sometimes, in journals and letters, photographs or even museum registers, a particular intensity about those moments of engagement indicates that the object's own story can illuminate that zone of encounter. Comprehending the historical moment of exchange, by which a net bag or boomerang was acquired for a plug of tobacco or metal knife, not only helps to reveal forgotten codes and protocols or remote frontiers, but also confirms that those frontiers were loaded with other possibilities, even with a tentative and provisional interdependence between black and white.[32]

The relationships between black and white recur in many interesting forms throughout MacGillivray's life. They are central to his view of the land and the way in which he interacts with it. This is another great differentiator between MacGillivray and many other figures on the frontier. MacGillivray displayed a very real interest in his relationships with local populations and particular individuals he encountered. This is certainly true of the two most significant relationships he developed, with Nienmal at Port Essington and Paida at Cape York, but is also true of the more fleeting interactions and relationships throughout his career. It is true that there is ample evidence of his brutality, insensitivity and even violence towards 'natives'. When it suited his interests MacGillivray was willing to lie, steal, cheat and even kill. However there is also real evidence of an honest interest in, and respect for, different cultures, ideas, languages and beliefs and a desire on MacGillivray's part to deal with the people he encountered in an friendly and open fashion for his own and, he believes, their benefit.

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[31] Libby Robin, 'The platypus frontier: eggs, Aborigines and empire in 19th century Queensland', in Rose and Davis (eds), *Dislocating the frontier*, 108.

[32] Philip Jones, *Ochre and Rust: Artefacts and Encounters on Australian Frontiers* (Kent Town, South Australia: Wakefield Press, 2007), 6.

Individuals such as Paida and Nienmal provide fascinating insights into the 'other side of the frontier'. Documenting how they developed their relationship with figures such as MacGillivray is another important part of frontier history. Nienmal's attachment to MacGillivray and the crew of HMS *Rattlesnake* is representative of many young Aboriginal men who saw a benefit in associating with white society.[33] Sadly his story is also illustrative of the perils of adopting this particular course.[34] Paida's relationship with MacGillivray is also an interesting example of the way in which relationships with particular whites were used to facilitate trade and exchange.

Several factors may have influenced MacGillivray's successful relationships with Indigenous people. It is important to note that his introduction to the formation of such relationships took place within the context of his career on board British surveying vessels. These vessels attempted wherever possible to maintain good relations with local populations. In his important analysis of the Invasion of North Queensland Noel Loos argued that the Royal Navy had an admirable record in terms of their contacts with Aboriginal groups.[35] Their dealings he states were:

> ...combined with an absence of immediate economic interest and a scientific if condescending enthusiasm to learn about the country and people visited. ...The leaders were men of the enlightenment; the fear and superstition associated with 'savagery' in the seventeenth century had been replaced by an aloof tolerance capable of shading off into romanticism.[36]

An added advantage for the Royal Navy was that their status as visitors rather than settlers made their presence, even when that presence was of longer duration, a far less threatening prospect for local populations. Coastal frontier encounters have often been seen as far less fraught with the prospect of violence than those occurring inland.[37] A direct example of the contrast between visitor and settler is given in MacGillivray's own life. As will be seen the one period in which he displayed little or no interest in the local population was that during which he was resident on Lizard Island for a period of almost a year. His primary concern when visits from mainland Aboriginal people did occur was the threat that they posed to his property – his mode of operation had shifted from visitor to resident and his response from curiosity to hostility.

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[33] For discussion of this see Reynolds, *The other side of the Frontier*, 132-133.

[34] For discussion of this see Reynolds, *The other side of the Frontier*, 153.

[35] Noel Loos, *Invasion and Resistance: Aboriginal–European Relations on the North Queensland Frontier 1861-1897* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1982), 8.

[36] *Ibid*, 9.

[37] Reynolds, *The other side of the Frontier*, 176.

The combination of his naval experience and his scientific interests gave MacGillivray good training, numerous opportunities and a sure footing on which to base his interactions with indigenous populations. However, it is also, I believe, important to acknowledge the talents of the individual man. In the pursuit of his ethnographic studies MacGillivray was willing to dedicate considerable time to his studies of different populations. These studies often required him to spent time alone with different groups – something that many of the others, particularly on board Her Majesty's surveying vessels would not have done. In this guise he was a student – he learned all he could from anyone that would teach him. MacGillivray's ethnographic observations ranged across every aspect of the life of various populations – mode of dress, language, canoes, houses, gardens, ceremonies – anything that he could glean either through conversation or observation.

In particular MacGillivray's various vocabularies were a remarkable achievement. At Port Essington his collected vocabulary consisted of over 500 words. His zeal in collecting words appeared to equal the energy with which he pursued his zoological interests. Collecting vocabularies was for MacGillivray a highly useful tool – he was able to use his linguistic knowledge to assist him in his work but it was also a sign of his acquisitiveness – each word another item to add to his multi-faceted collection.

The frontier was certainly a dangerous place - dangerous to all that ventured there – black or white. Encounters were fraught with the possibility for mistake, for violence and even death. However the frontier was also the place in which the most exciting discoveries were possible for a naturalist. Philip Jones notes that, 'The frontier often became an entangling, compromising field of barter, in which everything, even sacred objects held to be inalienable, had its price'.[38] To a collector such as MacGillivray this was exactly what was required. The frontier was the ideal place for such a man to make his mark.

MacGillivray lived and worked at a time when Britain and her colonies were undergoing rapid transformation and notions of class, respectability and social mobility were at the heart of the national agenda. At almost the same moment as MacGillivray sailed over the horizon aboard the *Rattlesnake,* Richard Cobden, the champion of the merchants and manufactures, warned the Tory Prime Minister that he had no choice but to govern with the blessing of the middle classes.[39] These were the years when the 'uneasy class' – a term coined by Edward Gibbon Wakefield in 1833 - aspired to a place in polite society, often clinging to it tenuously, and easily losing it. As Linda Colley has shown, the Empire often provided a way into the metropolitan elite particularly for those whose starting point was in the provinces. The Scots, she notes, were disproportionately the builders of Greater Britain.[40] This was also the time, as Harold Perkin has argued, when 'the birth of class' was followed by the rise of the professions. For many, professional status was a way to overcome humble beginnings and win respectability and a place among the middle classes. In several ways then MacGillivray's experience provides important insight into a range of the key issues of the day.

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[38] Philip Jones, *Ochre and Rust,* 3.

A recurring theme related to these social transformations highlighted above was the notion of respectability and who might, or might not, be considered a 'gentleman'. This was an issue that was hotly debated by those in Victorian society. In the years between 1830 and 1860 the application of the term underwent a radical shift from an emphasis on birth to an assessment largely based on conduct and character.[41] Business in the production of etiquette manuals boomed as individuals attempted not only to adopt suitable behaviours for themselves but also sought to gain the knowledge that would enable them to judge the behaviour of those around them.[42] This means that MacGillivray's life spanned almost exactly a period in which ideas of gentlemanly behaviour and notions of associated respectability were not only undergoing a radical change but were also the centre of debate both in Britain and the Colonies.

These are issues that are also inextricably tied to the evolving place of science and 'men of science' in Britain and the Colonies. These shifting ideas regarding respectability affected the scientific world as much as any other group within Victorian society. Historian Jim Endesby has noted that '...the concern the naturalists evince about the respectability of their science is invariably also a concern about their individual social status'.[43]

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[39] Cobden to Peel 23 June 1846. Cited in J. Morley, *The Life of Richard Cobden* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1881), 295.

[40] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (London: Vintage, 1992), 134.

[41] Michael Curtin, *Propriety and Position, A Study of Victorian Manners* (New York; London: Garland Publishing, 1987), 102. Also see Jim Endersby, *Imperial Nature: Joseph Hooker and the Practices of Victorian Science* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 251.

[42] Endersby, *Imperial Nature*, 249.

[43] *Ibid*, 254.

The scientific scene itself was in process of great change. If, in Britain, the 1830s can be characterised as the age of scientific gentlemen and the 1850s as the beginnings of reform which would open up the world of science and usher in the age of the professional, the intervening years when MacGillivray was attempting to establish his career, can be seen as an era of instability and flux. As will be seen within this thesis, MacGillivray was operating along the lines determined by an earlier generation while his contemporaries were already looking ahead to a different way of living and working. Attempting to unravel the way in which these factors affected MacGillivray's life and career is to enter into a tangled web full of unspoken knowledge, nuance, rules and hidden structures. The examination of this single life demonstrates the complexity of these ideas and the subtle ways in which these ideas and developments impacted on one individual.

It is first important to understand MacGillivray's own background. MacGillivray was not, by birth, a gentleman. The doors that would open for men provided with title, wealth and contacts would not open for him. His entry into the world of natural science was facilitated by his father's scientific career rather than by his social standing. In one telling description, Charles Darwin – despite professing enthusiasm for William MacGillivray's work on the birds of Scotland – observed that he 'had not much the appearance and manners of the gentleman'.[44] An echo of this sentiment can be felt in Sir William Hooker's comments regarding John MacGillivray's *Narrative of the Voyage of HMS Rattlesnake*, which he felt was 'better than could be expected from a man of restless uncouth appearance and manners'.[45] Even in MacGillivray's appointment to his most prestigious position, that of official naturalist on board HMS *Rattlesnake*, there lies evidence for the way in which his status hemmed him in, when the Captain of the vessel, Owen Stanley, commented on seeking an appropriate person to fill the position that he would prefer someone of 'lower status in life who would not mind being told what to do'.[46] MacGillivray was entirely acceptable to Stanley in this regard. Reading the case against him that led to his ignominious dismissal it was clear that MacGillivray was an obstreperous and fissiparous individual; reading between the lines it is also clear that his rough edges were, in part, cultural and that he was happier in the company of the men below decks who shared his like of a stiff drink and a good fight.

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[44] Robert Ralph, *William MacGillivray: Creatures of Land, Air and sea* (London: Merrell Holberton, 1999), 50.
[45] W. Hooker to Beaufort, 1 January 1852, Great Britain. Hydrographic Dept., Records M2318-2337, 1779-1918. Australian Joint Copying Project, National Library of Australia and State Library of New South Wales. Canberra: Australian Joint Copying Project, microform M2322-2324, Pre 1857 letters. Dress was an important part of being considered a 'gentleman'. Curtin writes that '...consonant with the increasing emphasis on the moral qualities of the gentleman, his clothes were viewed more as an index to his character than to his position. "It is one of the forms in which we naturally give expression to our taste, our constructive faculties, our reason, our feelings, our habits – in a word, to our character, as a whole."' Michael Curtin, *Propriety and Position, A Study of Victorian Manners* (New York; London: Garland Publishing, 1987), 105. Quote from *How to Behave* (1867).
[46] Goodman, *The Rattlesnake*, 31.

Whilst not, by birth, a 'gentleman of science' MacGillivray was certainly of better social standing than many of those he would work and associate with. Importantly he was well educated, exceedingly literate and articulate. His university education placed him well within respectable middle class society in Edinburgh. In some ways he is a personification of Harold Perkin's 'forgotten middle class'. This was a learned class, which saw themselves as separate from the interests of business or service. [47] In another sense he can be seen as being a part of Wakefield's uneasy classes. Wakefield identified these uneasy classes as comprising three-fourths of those who were engaged in trades or professions as well as 'all those who, not being very rich, intend that their children should follow some industrious pursuit'.[48] Wakefield's analysis of these uneasy classes was based on the condition of 'distress'. These classes were pray to distress which took many forms but it left them open to shifts in fortune in a way in which other classes were not. He wrote that, 'Distress is not confined to those who employ a material capital. The learning, skill and reputation united, of a professional man may be called his capital.'[49] It could be argued that a number of MacGillivray's attitudes, insecurities and issues with authority can be traced back to his uneasy social status. In his analysis of the appeal of radical politics to this particular social group R.S. Neale has argued that:

> Distressed they may have been, aspiring they certainly were. In this they were like the petit bourgeois. Whatever the real reasons for the frustration of the ambitions of these people they came to believe that a very important one was the weight of ancient restriction and aristocratic and oligarchic privilege. What was additionally galling were the attitudes of superiority adopted by people who were regarded by the petit bourgeois and the literates as inferior to themselves, at least in terms of usefulness and intellect.[50]

A consideration of MacGillivray's social status is, therefore, an interesting exercise. As with all examinations based on an individual life the realities of the way in which status impacted on his life demonstrates a far more complex web of ideas than can be contained in a more general history.

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[47] Harold Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society: England since 1880* (London: Routledge, 1990), 362.
[48] Edward Gibbon Wakefield, *England and America: A comparison of the social and political state of both nations* (London: Richard Bentley, 1833), 84.
[49] *Ibid*, 94.
[50] R.S. Neale, 'Class and Class-Consciousness in Early Nineteenth-Century England: Three Classes or Five?', *Victorian Studies*, 12, 1 (Sept., 1968): 15-16.

In this respect MacGillivray's life again provides an interesting contrast to that of Thomas Huxley. Despite his own lack of a gentlemanly background Thomas Huxley was able, through sheer brilliance, dogged determination and savvy networking, to become a part of the most influential, respected and respectable scientific circles in London, the place that he felt was the *only* real place to be working. Huxley became one of the key figures in London's scientific oligarchy. This powerful set of individuals was made up of a diverse range of individuals and was formed by a powerful combination of the new petty bourgeois talents, such as Huxley and Tyndall, and the established, gentlemanly figures, such as Jospeh Hooker and Francis Galton. Gentlemen scientists like Galton (John Waller tells us) did not resist the professionalisation of their calling; on the contrary they often allied with men of brilliance and energy like Huxley and Tyndall, lending the weight of their political and social connections to the development of a new scientific scene.[51] Having said that, Adrian Desmond has reminded us that this new scene was governed by contemporary notions of etiquette and respectable behaviour:

> While they might no longer be "Gentlemen of Science," Huxley portrayed his more modish "Scientific men" as the epitome of new middle-class gents, now defined in Samuel Smiles' Self-Help (1859) style catalogue in terms of truthfulness, courage and character rather than rank.[52]

Unfortunately for MacGillivray he did not find a place in either of the old camps, nor in the new sphere they were creating. His career would, however, be shaped by the interactions of these two groups as they set about forging their new identity.

In this new world of science Huxley saw himself sitting at the centre of the world while MacGillivray was flung, in disgrace, to the periphery. However the timing of MacGillivray's colonial career was crucial in this regard. His 1855-67 career placed him in the Australian colony during a vital period of imperial science. Whatever model of scientific development used – be it George Basalla's model of core and periphery, Roy Mcleod's model of the moving metropolis or Tony Ballantyne's web of empire – the period was rich in discovery, interactions, innovation and development.[53] MacGillivray's career offers an insight into the way in which one individual operated within the Australian context.

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[51] John C. Waller, 'Men of Science: Sir Francis Galton and the Professionalization of the British Life-Sciences', *Journal of the History of Biology*, 34, 1 (Spring, 2001): 109. See also Richard Bellon, 'Joseph Dalton Hooker's Ideals for a Professional Man of Science', *Journal of the History of Biology*, 34, 1 (Spring 2001): 77.

[52] Adrian Desmond, 'Redefining the X Axis: "Professionals," "Amateurs" and the Making of Mid-Victorian Biology: A Progress Report', *Journal of the History of Biology*, 34, 1 (Spring, 2001): 13.

[53] George Basalla, 'The spread of western science', *Science*, 156, 3775 (5 May 1967): 611-22. Roy MacLeod, 'On Visiting the "Moving Metropolis": Reflections on the Architecture of Imperial Science', *Historical Records of Australian Science*, 5, 3 (1982): 1-16. Tony Ballantyne, 'Race and the webs of empire: Aryanism from India to

Even in the antipodes, class and issues of respectability would raise themselves as issues in determining MacGillivray's future. His antipodean experiences provide a revealing contrast to those of figures such as Huxley and Alfred Russel Wallace. These men are representative of individuals that were able to use a scientific career – with an antipodean sojourn - as a way of transcending class barriers. In this sense, they were Linda Colley's Britons. MacGillivray was someone whose experiences were, in part, responsible for trapping him. Wallace used the fluidity of class structures in British colonies such as Malaya in order to facilitate his collecting career.[54] His status when in the field was that of a fellow gentleman to the officials and settlers he encountered on his travels, something he could never have hoped for had he stayed in Britain. MacGillivray encountered quite a different environment when he attempted to build a career in colonial Australia. An analysis of this period demonstrates much about the way in which class was operating, particularly in regards to science, within nineteenth century Australia. The Australian scientific scene was in some ways more tightly bound to class structures than Huxley would encounter back in Britain. Powerful individuals enforcing rigid divisions, concepts of gentlemanly behaviour and appropriate occupations would hamper MacGillivray's attempts to establish himself in his new home.

A recurring thread tied to these issues of status, class, respectability and the changing nature of Victorian science is the status of the positions of Naturalist and of collectors. MacGillivray demonstrated that he was keenly aware of the distinction between the two occupations in a letter to Edward Forbes in which he ruefully admitted that his 'duties too often merge into those of a mere collector and preserver of specimens'.[55] Collectors, it is clear, were of a lower order in every regard. Every sailor on board the *Rattlesnake*, it was said, was busy collecting shells in order to augment their income or in order to form their own collections. Collectors were paid labourers. Botanical collectors were of the lowest status.[56] In writing on the dangers of collecting in Borneo Jospeh Hooker commented that the region would do 'to expend a drunken collector upon.'[57]

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the Pacific,' *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 2, 3 (2001): 1-25. For a discussion of these concepts have evolved and developed see Alan Lester, 'Imperial Circuits and Networks: Geographies of the British Empire', *History Compass*, 4, 1 (2006): 124-141.

[54] Jane Camerini, 'Wallace in the field', *Osiris*, 2nd series, 11 (1996): 51.

[55] E. Forbes, 'Letters from J. MacGillivray, Esq., naturalist to H.M. Surveying Ship Rattlesnake, Capt. Stanley, R.N.', *The Annals and Magazine of Natural History*, 2, 31 (1848).

[56] Drayton, *Nature's Government: Science Imperial Britain and the Improvement of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 139.

[57] J. Hooker to W. Hooker, 6 August 1849, IL 194, quoted in Bellon, 'Joseph Dalton Hooker's Ideals for a Professional Man of Science', 2.

The status and position of a Naturalist is a more complex one. What becomes clear when studying Naturalists on board surveying vessels is how much the shape and nature of the position depended on the individual undertaking the role. There is no doubt that in the 1840s the position was a coveted one with a prestige attached that made it an attractive and enviable role. However the individual interests and character of each naturalist was key to the way in which the position was viewed by those on board the vessel and by those at home waiting eagerly for the fruits of their labours. The term would come under attack later as part of the reworking of Victorian science at which Thomas Huxley was at the centre. One cannot help but wonder if Huxley had a particular naturalist in mind when he commented to Joseph Hooker that:

> ...the word 'Naturalist' unfortunately includes a far lower order of men than Chemist, Physicist, or Mathematician. You don't call a man a Mathematician, deserving of his country's reward, because he has spent his life getting as far as quadratics; but every fool who can make a bad species and worse genera is a 'Naturalist.'[58]

Huxley's fool. Hooker's drunk. MacGillivray's loss in status was related to, and is intimately connected to, the diminishing regard for the positions that he held. MacGillivray's difficulties however, were ultimately also related to social habits that suggested a dubious character.

MacGillivray's conduct was such that his reputation as a gentleman would be sorely tested. Importantly 'Jock's' reputation as a drunk would have effectively barred him from respectable Victorian society – both in Britain and the colonies. In his analysis of Victorian Britain F.M.L. Thompson has stated that 'By the 1850s no respectable middle-class man would enter a public house'.[59] It was more complex than this. As Mike Huggins has noted in his examination of leisure and respectability in the male middle classes in Victorian England 'there could be different modes of behaviour within a single life style, at different times and in different contexts.'[60] For Thomas Huxley out on his first adventure, sampling sherry cobblers in an inn with MacGillivray, was a taste of a less respectable pleasure. He was, to an extent, taking advantage of his freedom; an exception to prove the rule. MacGillivray's behaviour was, however, consistent. His reputation for frequenting pubs was already well established when on board HMS *Rattlesnake*. Stephen Fremantle's comment that MacGillivray was 'a determined drunkard, and mixes only in the lowest society' demonstrated that even within the code of the Royal Navy MacGillivray had stepped too far out of bounds to be considered respectable.[61] Drinking – even heavily – behind closed doors was one thing; carousing in public with the ordinary sailors was another. The conspicuous consumption of drink was everywhere under assault at this time. A determined campaign began to be waged to reform the rough, hard-living and often brutal popular culture that had characterised eighteenth century society and impose social discipline through rational recreation.[62] In the face of this MacGillivray's habits were sure to hold him back. Drinking shaped the way others would see, and judge him.

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[58] Huxley to J. Hooker, 29 July 1859, quoted in Drayton, *Nature's Government*, 177.

[59] F.M.L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A social history of Victorian Britain, 1830-1900* (London: Fontana, 1988), 308.

[60] Mike J. Huggins, 'More sinful pleasures? Leisure, respectability and the male middle classes in Victorian England', *Journal of Social History*, 33, 3 (Spring 2000): 586.

The issues raised in relation to class, respectability and acceptable modes of behaviour are interwoven throughout MacGillivray's story. They are an undercurrent in all of his writings; in his interactions, his movements and his thoughts. The current might run beneath the surface, at times invisible, but it is, nonetheless a powerful force within MacGillivray's story and a key part of any analysis of the era and his life.

This thesis will argue that it is the combination of these factors that makes the examination of the life of John MacGillivray the ideal case study for a particular class of collecting. This collecting activity, operating on a free trade or commercial basis, took place at the fringes of the official networks and reputable institutions that traditionally form the basis for studies into the development of the natural history specimen trade. Men such as John MacGillivray carried and helped to consolidate the Empire in the antipodes beyond the reach of officialdom through their utilisation of developing colonial networks and structures. MacGillivray operated along what can be seen as a scientific frontier. This is a side of the Empire on which the sun never set that we need to know more about.

Existing work on John MacGillivray's life falls into two categories. The first is a small number of short biographical sketches in scholarly articles. The most comprehensive of these was produced by Robert Ralph who is best known for his work on the life of John's father, William MacGillivray.[63] Other articles by Ian Loch, Tom Iredale and G.P. Whitely provide some detail of John MacGillivray's life but none is comprehensive or traverses his whole career.[64] The most comprehensive biographical work was written as an obituary by MacGillivray's brother-in-law, the Reverend Patrick Beaton in 1868.[65] This article draws on some correspondence between the two men that cannot now be located and so is a doubly valuable source. MacGillivray is also given some attention in works concentrating on particular aspects of the history of the Great Barrier Reef – most notably in Bowen and Bowen's analysis of the Reef's marine science history, in which an attempt is made to rescue MacGillivray's reputation and to draw attention to his role in the area's scientific history. Bowen and Bowen state that:

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[61] Fremantle to Beaufort, 1 May 1855, Great Britain. Hydrographic Dept., Records M2318-2337, 1779-1918. Australian Joint Copying Project, National Library of Australia and State Library of New South Wales. Canberra: Australian Joint Copying Project, microform M2322-2324, Pre 1857 letters, f.358.

[62] See Peter Bailey, *Leisure and class in Victorian England; rational recreation and the contest for control 1830-1885* (London; New York : Methuen, 1987), 47.

[63] Ralph, 'John MacGillivray', 185-95. For his work on William MacGillivray see *William MacGillivray: Creatures of Air, Land and Sea* (London: Merrell Holberton and the Natural History Museum, London, 1999).

> MacGillivray was primarily a zoologist, and his reports of the three voyages mark a decisive turning point in Reef science, from a preoccupation with land-based botany to zoology: marine, terrestrial and avian.[66]

Not even his darkest moment could dampen their enthusiasm:

> Whatever the reasons or justification for the dismissal of MacGillivray, Australian Reef science was deprived of further achievements of one of the nation's really great naturalists, a much merited accolade that runs through the literature to this day.[67]

The second category of existing literature on MacGillivray revolves around his participation in three Royal Navy voyages. Two works in particular have given MacGillivray's life significant attention – Goodman's on the voyage of HMS *Rattlesnake* and David's on that of HMS *Herald*.[68] Both works go into some detail regarding MacGillivray while on board the vessels as well as his later career. MacGillivray's own narrative of the *Rattlesnake* provides a picture of the voyage in his own words. It is the period of his life from which his own voice rings loudest.

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[64] Iredale, 'The last letters of John MacGillivray', 40-63. Loch, 'John MacGillivray' [cont], 5. Loch, 'John MacGillivray', 9. Whitley, 'Early Naturalist in Queensland [John MacGillivray]', 3-4.

[65] Patrick Beaton, 'A Martyr to Science', *Good Words*, July, (1868): 425-429. The Rev Patrick Beaton married MacGillivray's sister Anne Dorothea MacGillivray in Mauritius in 1853. Beaton was in Mauritius from 1851 until 1856. Beaton wrote a book titled *Creoles and Coolies or Five years in Mauritius* while he was minister of St Andrew's Church and Secretary of the Bible Society of Mauritius. His other major work was *Six Months in Reunion: a clergyman's holiday, and how he passed it* (1860). His only work of fiction was *Marion Leslie*. The couple lived in New Zealand for some time and it would appear that Beaton was Chaplin to the Forces in Auckland. They lived for some time in London and then in Paris. For details see James Fergusson, 'Catalogue Review', *Bookdealer*, No.1805 (2009).

[66] James Bowen & Margarita Bowen, *The Great Barrier Reef – History, Science, Heritage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 94.

[67] Bowen and Bowen, *The Great Barrier Reef*, 104.

[68] Goodman, *The Rattlesnake* (2005). David, *The Voyage of HMS Herald* (1995).

Two works have used MacGillivray's later writings as the basis for an examination of the latter part of his career. Iredale's 'Last letters of John MacGillivray' reproduces MacGillivray's letters to the Sydney collector and eventual curator at the Australian Museum, Edward Pearson Ramsay, giving a good picture of MacGillivray's time in partnership with James Fowler Wilcox in Grafton.[69] Iredale uses the letters in an attempt to salvage MacGillivray's reputation stating:

> It must be remembered when reading these letters that they were written in the field without reference to anything save his own memory; written by an active hunter at the end of a day's work, and I think readers will agree with me that the bulk of the rumours about his incapacity were, to say the least of them, much exaggerated, if not entirely unfounded.[70]

Another author to appreciate the significance of the later part of MacGillivray's career is Steve Mullins in his extensive work on the history of contact in the Torres Strait in which he uses MacGillivray's writings for the *Sydney Morning Herald* as a key source – particularly in regard to the development of the sandalwood, beche-de-mere and pearl shell industries in the Torres Strait.[71]

As has already been noted, no dedicated or comprehensive biography of John MacGillivray currently exists. In terms of scope the aim of this thesis is therefore twofold. First to complete a more detailed study of MacGillivray's life, in particular aiming to document that period of his career that has never before received any significant attention from previous authors or historians. The second aim is to use this additional documentation and knowledge of MacGillivray's life as a method of analysing the place of natural history collecting and collectors in mid-nineteenth century Australia and the Pacific on the fringes of the British Empire, and therefore on the frontiers of colonial society.

I have already highlighted the contribution that an examination of MacGillivray's experiences would bring to a study of collecting and frontier experience. Although the case for a biography of John MacGillivray is overwhelming, it is important not to assume that biography itself is unproblematic. Before proceeding it is essential to reflect upon the nature of the biography that I have written and how this relates to broader issues involved in the practice of biography.

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[69] Iredale, 'The last letters of John MacGillivray', 40-63.
[70] *Ibid*, 41
[71] Steve Mullins, *Torres Strait, A History of Colonial Occupation and Culture Contact 1864-1897* (Rockhampton: Central Queensland University Press, 1995).

Biography is a genre of writing with a troubled past. It is often said that it is a genre that has continued with very little theoretical basis and as relatively free from academic criticism.[72] Ironically this is generally stated within the introductory remarks within the rapidly increasing number of volumes which, within their pages, attempt to fill what they identify as this particular void. Authors commonly refer to the disregard in which biography is held in academic circles. Richard Holmes has referred to it as a 'maverick or mongrel art'.[73] Inevitably, in their search for a theoretical grounding for the genre, writers delve into the history of biography – tracing its development starting with Samuel Johnson and then trailing through such figures as Lytton Strachey, Virginia Woolf, Andre Maurois and Sigmund Freud.[74] The ensuing discussions regarding the development of the genre revolve around the legitimacy of the form. How much is a biographer inventing the truth? Can we ever know the mind of another? To what extent can an individual life illuminate larger ideas? What are the ethical considerations behind exposing the details of a life? What purpose is there behind such exposure? What relationship should the writer of biography have to their subject? Perhaps the question that has dominated the writing on biographical theory in the recent past, largely due to the dominance of the field by literary biography, has revolved around the question of the genre's relationship to fiction.

In seeking to address these questions various authors have struggled to develop a theory of biography. Or rather, as one writer on the subject, Ray Monk, has argued, opinion has divided between those who argue for an essentially non-theoretical approach to biography and those who see biography as related to fiction.[75]

Two authors in particular have informed my thinking in terms of my approach to the idea of biography and the questions regarding the underlying theory of the genre – Richard Holmes and Ray Monk. In his remarkable paper in which he relates biography to the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein, Monk argues that biography is 'fundamentally and essentially, to its very fingertips, as it were, a *non*theoretical exercise.'[76] Monk argues that

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[72] Ray Monk, 'Life without Theory: Biography as an Exemplar of Philosophical Understanding', *Poetics Today,* 28, 3 (2007): 528. Ian Donaldson, Peter Read & James Walter (eds), *Shaping Lives: Reflections on Biography* (Canberra: Humanities Research Centre, Australian National University: 1992), iii-iv. William St Clair 'The Biographer as Archaeologist' in Peter France and William St Clair (eds), *Mapping Lives: The Uses of Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 224. Richard Holmes 'The Proper Study?' in France and St Clair (eds), *Mapping Lives,* 7-8. Michael Shortland and Richard Yeo (eds), *Telling lives in science* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 3.

[73] Richard Holmes, 'Biography – inventing the truth' in John Batchelor (ed), *The art of literary biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 15.

[74] For a comprehensive summary of the history of biography see Ray Monk, 'Life without Theory', 529-562. Also see James Walter, '"The Solace of Doubt"? Biographical Methodology after the Short Twentieth Century' in France and St Clair (eds), *Mapping Lives*, 321-335.

[75] Monk, 'Life without Theory', 556.

> A really good historian can, by exercising what Wittgenstein calls the "understanding that consists in seeing connections," reveal the relations among the facts and, by so doing, transform a mere compilation into a great work of art.

Using this technique, Monk argues, offers a way in which a biographer can develop a point of view, a way of seeing the myriad of facts about a life that will give it meaning, that enable a reader to understand a life.[77] What Monk is arguing for in essence is a way of approaching biography rather than a theoretical model in which to structure the biographical task. While Monk's advocacy of a non-theoretical model of biography appears at first to simplify the biographer's task, his exhortation to view the biographical task along Wittgenstein's lines of connection is in fact a complex and demanding task. This requires that the biographer view the life of their subject in such a way that the threads of their existence, the patterns of their actions, their modes of behaviour connect into a coherent, comprehensible whole. This whole is not, Monk argues, an argument. It is rather a way of putting forward a point of view, a way of seeing.

This mode of biography has particular resonances when applied to the life of MacGillivray. In previous accounts in which MacGillivray's life has featured his story has suffered from being viewed both partially and, most importantly, from a particular 'point of view'. The partial representations have occurred largely in those studies focusing on MacGillivray's contemporaries. The prevailing way of seeing his achievements and experiences is based on his failure to continue on the trajectory which he appeared to be going to follow based on his career as a naturalist attached to surveying vessels, the Royal Navy and the British scientific elite. His actions after 1855 have been viewed as the unfortunate consequence of poor behaviour rather than a crucial and interesting part of MacGillivray's career. In viewing MacGillivray's *entire* life, in viewing his career from the point of view of a frontier life, I believe that his biography becomes a far more enlightening and significant study and offers a better view of MacGillivray's character, motivations and experiences.

The neglect of MacGillivray's later career has led to a particular distortion of his reputation based on the events which took place on board HMS *Herald*. In seeking to redress this unbalance I am not aiming to rescue MacGillivray's reputation or to champion his cause.

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[76] *Ibid*, 528.

[77] *Ibid*, 563.

Other authors have already sought in some sense to restore MacGillivray's name through their work. Calaby's entry in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* concludes that MacGillivray's 'lapses have largely been forgotten, however, because of his great contributions to Australian natural history.'[78] Iredale's paper on MacGillivray states that 'the reading of this article will, I hope, lift the veil, and allow his life's work to be better appreciated, any lapse being overlooked through his services to Australian zoology'[79]. Rather than overlook these 'lapses' I am seeking, through a more thorough examination of the man, to make a contribution to what is known about MacGillivray's life and career both pre and post 1855.

In viewing MacGillivray's life in a partial manner previous studies have missed a valuable opportunity for understanding both MacGillivray's character and the opportunities that a biography provides for insights into broader historical themes. If MacGillivray's life is viewed as a life lived on the frontier, a life of exploration, a life of adventure, it offers quite a different view from that of MacGillivray as a failed scientist, as a determined drunk, as an outcast.

Biographer Richard Holmes argues that in having the whole of a life before them the biographer is able to see:

> ...repetition and the emergence of significant behaviour over an entire lifetime. As a result I have become convinced of the integrity of human character. Even a man's failings, sudden lapses, contradictory reactions, sudden caprices, seem in the long run to fall within a pattern of character.[80]

In this sense MacGillivray's 'lapses' are important aspects of his character. Rather than smoothing over these incidents in order to restore some kind of scientific credibility, MacGillivray's obstreperous nature and less savoury habits must be examined, probed and given due weight within his story.

The second aim of this thesis is to use this additional documentation and knowledge of MacGillivray's life as a method of analysing the place of natural history collecting and collectors in mid-nineteenth century Australia and the Pacific. In this second aim MacGillivray's life is effectively used as a prism to shed light on a range of issues and ideas. This is a common biographical approach, particularly for historians, and one to which

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[78] J.H. Calaby, 'MacGillivray, John (1821-1867)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography Online*, http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A020144b.htm?hilite=macgillivray, (accessed 2 August 2010).
[79] Iredale, 'The last letters of John MacGillivray', 40.
[80] Richard Holmes, *Footsteps: Adventures of a Romantic Biographer* (London: Penguin Books, 1985), 174.

MacGillivray's life lends itself well.[81] In her well known discussion of this particular biographical approach, Barbara Tuchman identifies its advantages as a technique that captures and holds the reader's attention through concentration on an individual life and for its ability to include the universal in the particular.[82]

It is valuable to consider the importance and relative weight that is given to this aspect of biographical writing. To what extent is the aim of the thesis truly a biography – an examination of the man himself, or am I merely using MacGillivray as an historical source – the prism through which other events are analysed? How much is this story about understanding MacGillivray the man, his thoughts, actions, motivations and feelings and how much is it about understanding the environments in which he operated, the social structures on which his existence depended and people with whom he interacted? The answer is inevitably that both are necessary. A good understanding of MacGillivray's character is vital if he is to function as an effective prism. The historical prism needs to be focussed in order to use him as a tool through which to view broader themes. It is therefore necessary to understand the man himself, the way he operated, his motivations, desires, strengths and weaknesses.

In order to better understand MacGillivray as part of my research I have travelled to a number of the places he travelled to and collected in. I have attempted to gain an insight into his character and experiences through a better understanding of his physical environments. The best known advocate of this form of biographical 'footstepping' has been the biographer Richard Holmes. Holmes has used this technique in order to establish what he sees as a relationship between the biographer and their subject. This relationship is, Holmes argues:

> ...not merely a "point of view" or an "interpretation", but a continuous living dialogue between the two as they move over the same historical ground, the same trail of events. There is between them a ceaseless discussion, a reviewing and questioning of motives and actions and consequences, a steady if subliminal exchange of attitudes, judgments and conclusions.[83]

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[81] For discussion see Susan Magarey, 'Introduction', Susan Magarey and Kerrie Round, (eds), *Living history: Essays on history as biography* (Unley, South Australia: Australian Humanities Press, 2005), 1. Barbara W. Tuchman, 'Biography as a Prism of History' in Marc Pachter (ed), *Telling Lives: the biographer's art* (Washington: New Republic Books, 1979), 133-147.

[82] Tuchman, 'Biography as a Prism of History', 134.

[83] Holmes, *Footsteps*, 66.

In many ways this retracing echoes the more recent trends associated with the burgeoning genre of historical reenactment.[84] On the one hand, Holmes' footstepping is seeking an even more intimate relationship with his subject – almost, he argues, a type of love affair.[85] However he goes on to state that:

> ...the true biographic process begins precisely at the moment, at the places, where this naïve form of love and identification breaks down. The moment of personal disillusion is the moment of impersonal, objective re-creation.[86]

Holmes' approach is an interesting one to consider in writing about MacGillivray. Visiting those locations MacGillivray travelled and worked is, I believe, crucial to developing an understanding of the man and his experiences. The physical environment in which MacGillivray worked shaped his entire life and career. The sights and sounds that surrounded him were his life's work, his true calling. The conditions he encountered, the heat beating down, the swarms of flies and mosquitoes, the sound of coral breaking underfoot with the sound of breaking glass and producing edges just as dangerous – all of these would shape his reactions. So to would the beauty of the birds flying overhead, the gentle rivers and creeks, the pristine beaches and the sounds of animals, waiting for discovery, as they rustled through the undergrowth. Experiencing the environments in which MacGillivray operated does trigger some deeper understanding of the man and his work or at least of the affective context in which it was lived.[87] Perhaps fortunately in terms of writing biography, MacGillivray's actions also provide ample moments triggering disillusion and a break down of identification that can lead to the impersonal, critical moments in which the biographic process can begin.

It is important to note that this biography will not undertake a specific analysis of MacGillivray's scientific achievements or contribution. The thesis offers a broader examination of MacGillivray's life, career and experiences rather than detailing his contribution to science or scientific thinking. In taking this approach many of the issues facing scientific biography – in particular that of balancing a person's science and life – are sidestepped.[88] This approach melds in some ways with the way in which MacGillivray himself worked. MacGillivray was a very talented communicator and was interested in presenting his work to a diverse audience – far broader than just the scientific community. His writing and lecturing are significant aspects of his career that set him apart from many of his contemporary collectors such as James Fowler Wilcox, John Gilbert and Frederick Strange.[89] MacGillivray obviously enjoyed discussing his work and framing his activities within the context of adventure and discovery. His writing, particularly that done post 1855, was not intended primarily for a scientific audience. This same dimension of his approach can be seen in the pleasure he obviously derived from delivering lectures to the people of Grafton during his time based in the area while in partnership with Wilcox. I do not believe that MacGillivray's biography would best be presented through a listing, examination or documentation of his scientific discoveries. I also do not believe that his significance lies with the number and/or diversity of type specimens he collected. If his significance were to be measured in this way other collectors were far more successful.[90]

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[84] For discussion of this trend see issue of *Criticism*, 46, 3 (2004) articles by Alex Cook, Iain McCalman and Vanessa Agnew. See also: Iain McCalman and Paul Pickering (eds) *Historical Reenactment: From Realism to the Affective Turn* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010).

[85] Holmes, *Footsteps,* 66. For the dangers associated with the relationships between biographer and subject see Graham Robb, 'A Narcissits' Wedding' in Mark Bostridge, *Lives for Sale: Biographer's Tales* (London: Continuum, 2004), 11-14.

[86] Holmes, *Footsteps,* 67.

[87] McCalman and Pickering (eds) *Historical Reenactment* (2010).

Having said this, any single aspect of MacGillivray's scientific work would be a subject worthy of further attention. In particular MacGillivray's anthropological observations would be an area that would be a significant and rewarding focus for future work. His word lists for different languages are likewise a source for interesting work by Australian and Pacific linguists. This type of detailed discipline based analysis lies outside the scope of this work.

I will begin my examination of MacGillivray's life on 25 April 1855. He was 33 years old and his life was about to change forever. This point marks the convening of the court of enquiry into MacGillivray's conduct on board HMS *Herald* and his subsequent dismissal from the vessel. The dismissal marks a turning point in MacGillivray's career which would effectively shape the rest of his life. MacGillivray's dismissal from the *Herald* is also central to the way in which MacGillivray has been remembered. It marks the moment at which his connection to the official, respectable and powerful scientific circles of Britain was effectively severed. MacGillivray's contact with this world following his disgrace would be tenuous, mediated and coloured forever by the events of these two days. MacGillivray's career before his dismissal is a story of a British sea-going naturalist on board the vessels of the Royal Navy. The story that follows is one of an entrepreneur, traveller, opportunist and adventurer based in the Pacific and negotiating a world of colonial people, politics and priorities.

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[88] For discussion of this tension see *Isis*: '*Focus: Biography in the History of Science*', 97 (2006), in particular see Theodore M. Porter, 'Is the Life of the Scientist a Scientific Unit?', *Isis*, 97 (2006): 314-321. See also Michael Shortland and Richard Yeo (eds), *Telling lives in science* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[89] See Isabella J. Meade, 'Frederick Strange (1807-1873)' http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A020455b.htm?hilite=strange, and A.H Chisolm, 'John Gilbert (1810?-1845)', http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A010407b.htm?hilite=gilbert (accessed 2 August 2010).

[90] See detailed breakdown of type specimen by collector given in Clemency Thorne Fisher, *The importance of early Victorian natural historians in the discovery and interpretation of the Australian fauna, with special reference to John Gilbert*, PhD Thesis, Liverpool Polytechnic, 1992. Fisher's statistical analysis of the period between 1835 – 1850 places MacGillivray in the top eight collectors of new species from the period however his contribution is marginal compared to a collector such as John Gilbert. Within this remarkable and highly useful thesis Figures 10-12 show that the nine most prolific collectors were John Gilbert, John Gould, Benjamin Bynoe, John Jardine, John MacGillivray, Frederick Strange, Charles Coxen, Sir Thomas Mitchell and Charles Sturt.

Three brief chapters will then examine MacGillivray's career prior to his dismissal from HMS *Herald*. MacGillivray's earliest fieldwork in Scotland and his relationship with his father, the eminent ornithologist and Professor of Natural History at Aberdeen, William MacGillivray, will be examined along with his first voyage to Australian waters as private collector for Lord Derby on board HMS *Fly*. The following chapter will focus on his experiences on board HMS *Rattlesnake*. It is his contributions from this voyage and his authorship of the voyage's official narrative for which he is most known and which has, therefore, received the most attention from historians and scientists interested in his life. MacGillivray's own *Narrative* of the voyage also paints a vivid and detailed picture of this particular period. These two factors combine to make a detailed examination of this voyage less vital to this thesis as it might otherwise have been.

The remaining chapters will examine MacGillivray's life in detail from his dismissal in 1855 until his death in 1867. Far from being a story simply of failure and despair, an examination of MacGillivray's final twelve years is a story of travel, adventure and discovery. The examination also offers valuable insights into the world of natural history collecting and the cultural place of science in colonial society. It is partly for these reasons that MacGillivray's career from 1855 until 1867 forms the focus of this thesis.

It is interesting that the latter part of MacGillivray's life has never been fully described or documented. While sources for this period are more difficult to discover, they do exist and once analysed provide, in vivid detail, glimpses into life in the Pacific for a private collector. Articles written by MacGillivray for the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Empire* newspapers describing his various trading voyages and ventures, with special reference to the sandalwood and beche-de-mer industries, provide a fascinating insight into this period of his life and the people he was associating with. As well as these articles, MacGillivray's journals for this period have recently been discovered in the collection of the Australian

National Maritime Museum in Sydney. These journals have never been analysed or documented before and they contain significant new material that has greatly contributed to this thesis.

The first of these post-dismissal chapters follows MacGillivray through the years 1855-1857 as he attempted to forge a new career in Sydney. MacGillivray's attempts to earn a living offer valuable insight into the state of the scientific community in Sydney at this time. The next three chapters trace MacGillivray's career in and amongst the islands of the south-western Pacific. From February 1858 until July 1860 MacGillivray's search for a career as a private collector took him to New Caledonia and into the world of the sandalwood trader James Paddon. From New Caledonia MacGillivray travelled on to the islands of Vanuatu where he made a home for some time at the mission of the Reverend John Geddie on Aneityum.[91] MacGillivray's collecting took place amidst a turbulent, often violent, time in the region with intense and bitter conflicts often occurring between the missionaries and the sandalwood traders. MacGillivray managed, not without difficulty, to straddle the two worlds and his life and writings open up this particular period in history in fascinating ways.

A voyage of a very different nature to those he undertook as an official naturalist on board the *Fly*, *Rattlesnake* and *Herald* is the focus of the next chapter. The Torres Strait expedition took place in 1860. The trader James Paddon fitted out the *Julia Percy* and sent her to seek sandalwood, beche-de-mere and tortoise shell – and any other tradable commodity that could be located along the way. MacGillivray was on board and hoped to use the voyage to further his collecting activities and perhaps make his fortune. MacGillivray's description of the voyage is one of the most fascinating and detailed descriptions to exist of this type of voyage – one that was common during the period. The tendency for such voyages to veer toward the more dubious end of respectability, to put it mildly, mean that contemporary accounts are few and far between. To have one documented so thoroughly by so talented a chronicler as MacGillivray is a significant addition to the literature relating to this element in Australian and Pacific maritime and trade history.

Following what would turn out to be his disastrous period on board the *Julia Percy,* MacGillivray was based – in fact effectively stranded - for eight months on Lizard Island on the Great Barrier Reef. This period has never before received any examination due partly to a lack of source material. The discovery of a day-to-day journal of MacGillivray's time at Lizard Island makes an analysis of this period of his life possible for the first time. This chapter adds significant material to what is known about MacGillivray's life and career and is the period for which it is possible now to gain a more intimate knowledge of his thoughts and feelings on a range of personal and professional matters.

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[91] I have chosen to use the modern spelling for the name of Aneityum within the text. MacGillivray uses Aneiteum. I have not altered the spelling within MacGillivray's texts.

Once free from Lizard Island, MacGillivray made another attempt to establish himself in Australia. From 1862 until 1866 he worked in Sydney and regional New South Wales as a private collector – four of these years were in Grafton in partnership with James Fowler Wilcox. The key source for this period is a series of letters from MacGillivray to E.P. Ramsay of the Australian Museum.[92] Another key source for this period is MacGillivray's working notebook for the period 1856 -1866 which is held by the Mitchell Library. This small notebook contains descriptions of his collecting activities for various Australian museums and private collectors as well as notes regarding his observations and discoveries while based in the Grafton area. This chapter offers another glimpse into the scientific community in Sydney as well as a different look at the development of Australia's state museums and the 1866 Intercolonial exhibition in Melbourne.

The final chapter examines MacGillivray's last months living and working in Sydney. It examines his sudden death, certainly alone and almost penniless, but also not the simple 'hobo' that he has been painted. At his death he was still collecting, working and planning his next expedition north back to Cape York, back to the Great Barrier Reef, back to the richest collecting grounds of his career.

Before heading there ourselves, we must first proceed to a court of enquiry on board HMS *Herald*. It is important to witness the scene as MacGillivray, self described as a 'little, ugly red-headed "tawney"[93] Scot, sat before a hastily convened judgement panel – a panel stacked against him - that held his very future in their hands. An examination of this small and vicious drama begins the task of piecing together the fragments of this extraordinary life.

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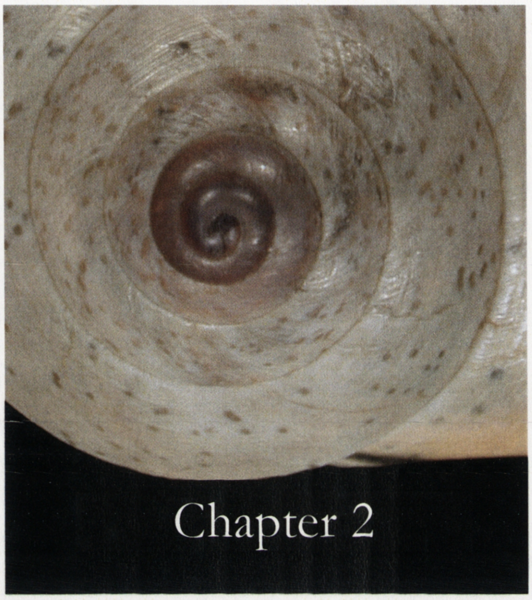
[92] Fifteen letters held by the Mitchell library as part of the E.P. Ramsay papers. E.P. Ramsay - papers, being mainly correspondence relating to natural history, 1860-1912, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, MLMSS 563/3, Microform CY 2321, frames 1-424. Fourteen of these are also are reproduced in Iredale, 'The Last Letters of John MacGillivray', 40-63. These letters were published together with a summary of MacGillivray's career post his dismissal from the *Herald*.

[93] MacGillivray to Harley, 27 June 1846, Harley Correspondence, Leicester and Rutland Record Office, 13D56/7, f.41.



Chapter 2

‘A blister on my heart’: dismissal and disgrace
April 1855

The charges against him were grave. The verdict of the Board of Enquiry was conclusive. On 26 April 1855 John MacGillivray, naturalist on board HMS *Herald*, was dismissed. Henry Mangles Denham, Captain of the *Herald*, wrote of his relief to be rid of him '...I feel as if a blister was removed from my heart'.[1]

MacGillivray himself was silent regarding his dismissal. No record survives of his thoughts or feelings. He did not attempt to clear his name or justify his actions. No clear account exists as to how the enquiry proceedings took place. The picture that emerges from the fragments that remain is of a painful, passionate, bitter and very public dispute as tensions, simmering for years on board the vessel, finally erupted. This enquiry and dismissal would shape not only the rest of MacGillivray's life, but would also colour the way in which his career, contributions and character would be regarded, recorded and related until the present day. The forces that shaped him led him to this crisis. From it there was no recovery.

MacGillivray was silent regarding his dismissal. Others were not as reticent. The catalogue of his offences and the bitterness of the dispute were poured out in letters to the voyage's supporters in England: Sir William Hooker, Director of the Botanic Gardens at Kew; Sir Francis Beaufort, the head of the Hydrographic Office; Captain John Washington, Beaufort's successor and the Lords of the Admiralty. These letters and reports were written by MacGillivray's chief accusers; the head of the Board of Enquiry, Captain Stephen Fremantle of HMS *Juno*, and the Captain of the *Herald*, Henry Mangles Denham.

The intricacies of the story of MacGillivray's dismissal have yet to receive significant attention. Up until then, his career and reputation seemed set to be those of a distinguished naturalist. This incident was a dramatic turning point but has attracted only minor attention in the historical record. Yet any analysis of MacGillivray's life must take full account of this pivotal moment. The trajectory of his life would be forever altered. MacGillivray's dismissal provides opportunities for key insights into MacGillivray's life, career and character. On a larger scale the dispute provides material illustrative of the way in which the system of natural history collecting operated throughout this era, as well as highlighting some of the politics, pressures, intricacies and power relationships within the Australian colony and on board Her Majesty's surveying vessels. The paucity of published accounts of MacGillivray's life and work – given his participation in three important surveying missions and his having been the chronicler of perhaps one of the most important of them – could be seen as a measure of the disastrous effect the dismissal had on his career and the ways in which it has been recorded.

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[1] Denham to Hooker, 27 April 1855, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew Directors' correspondence Vol. XXXV, f.134.

Maritime historian Andrew David, has carried out the most thorough account of MacGillivray's dismissal in his exhaustive work documenting the voyage of the *Herald*.[2] David has failed however to make use of certain key documents.[3] The unsavoury nature of MacGillivray's departure has meant that others have skated over the incident, stating merely that he left the service in Sydney in 1855.[4] Most accounts focus on issues of intoxication and ill behaviour as an easy analysis of the situation.[5] Other accounts of the *Herald*'s scientific work have simply written MacGillivray out of the story, attributing the role of naturalist to those that followed him for the remainder of the voyage.[6] No account has so far drawn out the significance of the many factors at play in this drama or looked more closely at the figures whose lives touched upon it and who influenced its outcome.

Although less well known than its predecessors the voyage of the *Herald* holds an important place in Australia's maritime history. It was one of a series of significant surveying expeditions undertaken by the Royal Navy's Hydrographic Service in the nineteenth century. The *Herald* followed in the wake of vessels such as HMS *Beagle* (1837-1843), *Fly* (1842-1846) and *Rattlesnake* (1846-1850). These expeditions were key to nineteenth century antipodean discovery, science, exploration and documentation.

At just over nine years, the voyage of the *Herald* was one of the longest, and certainly one of the most ambitious, surveying expeditions to have been undertaken by the Royal Navy. The *Herald* left England on 21 February 1852 and did not return until 1 June 1861.

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[2] Andrew David, *The Voyage of HMS Herald / to Australia and the South-west Pacific 1852-1861 under the command of Captain Henry Mangles Denham* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press at the Miegunyah Press, 1995), 427-428.

[3] In particular David did not use the anonymous letter written to the *Empire* or the official report of MacGillivray's dismissal written by Fremantle.

[4] J.H. Calaby, 'MacGillivray, John (1821 - 1867)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography Online*, http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A020144b.htm?hilite=macgillivray (accessed 2 August 2010).

[5] For example see Ian Loch, who states, 'In 1855 he was dismissed for "intemperance", a notable achievement attached to a navy which issued grog daily'. 'John MacGillivray', *Australian Shell News*, 58, July (1987): 9.

[6] For example see *Gentlemen Collectors / Natural History in NSW* 1826-1891 (Sydney: Historic Houses Trust of NSW, 1983) which lists Raynor and MacDonald as Naturalists for the *Herald* and Huxley as Naturalist for the *Rattlesnake*.

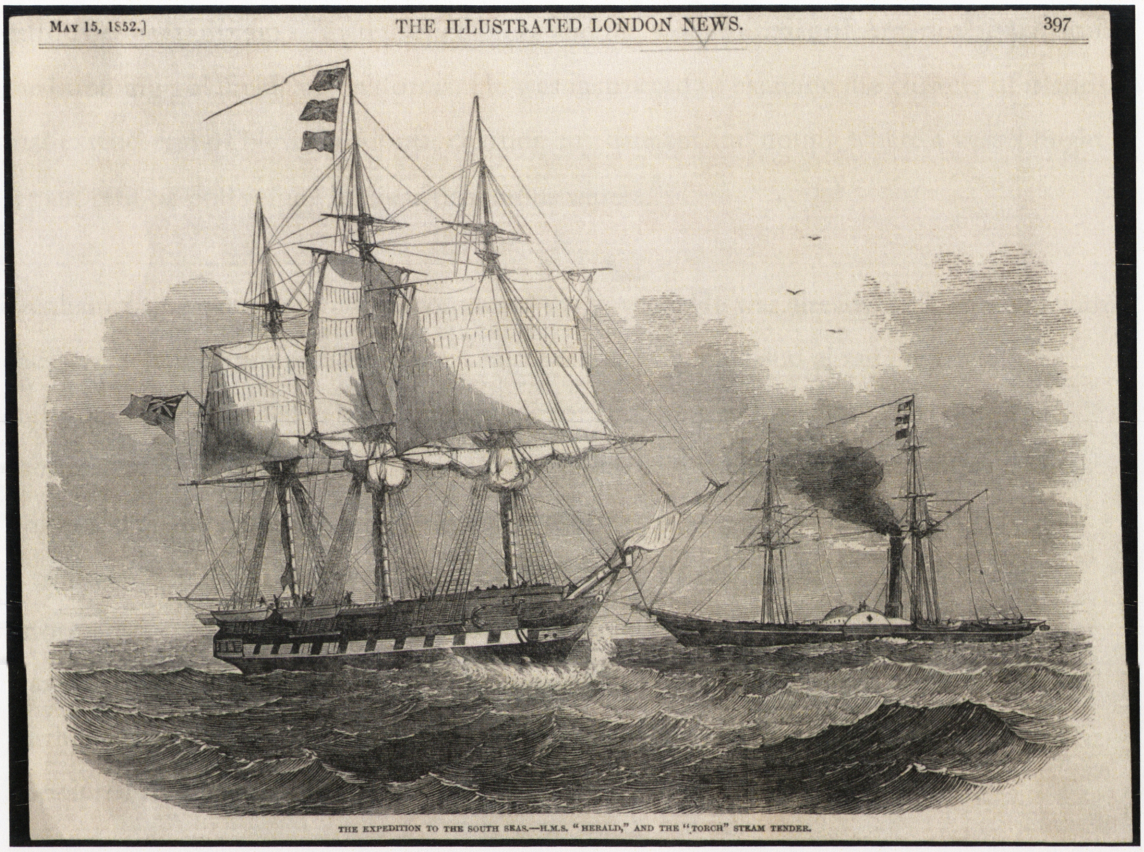
MAY 15, 1852.]
THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS.
397
THE EXPEDITION TO THE SOUTH SEAS.—H.M.S. "HERALD," AND THE "TORCH" STEAM TENDER.

Plate 3: The expedition to the South Seas, HMS *Herald* and the steam tender *Torch*.
(Illustrated London News, 15 May 1852. National Library of Australia)

For Denham the voyage was certainly the outstanding achievement of his distinguished career, however it came at great personal cost. The young son he took with him on the voyage died on board the vessel and the length of his absence meant that the son he left behind was unrecognisable to him upon his return.[7]

Denham's instructions for the voyage were ambitious. The *Herald* was to thoroughly examine a large area of the south-west Pacific in order to ensure the safety of the increasing traffic between Britain's Australian colonies and the western coast of America, in particular the booming goldfields of California. He was instructed to examine the clusters of islands that extend east of New Caledonia, charting any dangers and noting where a vessel might repair, refit or find refuge in these dangerous waters.[8]

Denham was a natural choice to command the voyage. He was already well regarded within the service having undertaken surveys in the Bristol Channel and along the coast of Ireland. Denham had also been responsible for surveying in Liverpool Harbour. That exercise led to the dredging of the Victoria Channel – an achievement for which he was promoted to the rank of Commander.[9] In 1851 he had written to the Admiralty, recommending that a surveying voyage to the South Pacific would furnish valuable information regarding sites to which convicts could be transported. Soon after this letter was received, a request was received from the Wesleyan Missions regarding the need for further surveys in Fiji and Tonga.[10] A voyage was deemed necessary and Denham was appointed to undertake the work.

The Admiralty instructions to Denham also included a direction regarding investigations into the natural history of the region. The *Herald* naturalist was to have every reasonable facility in making and preserving his collections relating to the botany, zoology and geology of the area.[11] After considering a number of candidates for the position John MacGillivray was appointed as Naturalist to the voyage.

The role of natural history investigation and collection in surveying expeditions such as that of the *Herald* had, by this stage, claimed a legitimate, and even prominent, part in the operations of such vessels. MacGillivray himself had played a significant part in this trend having carried out the duties of private collector for the Earl of Derby on board the *Fly* alongside the official naturalist for the voyage, Joseph Beete Jukes, and then himself as official Naturalist aboard the *Rattlesnake*. At the time of his appointment to the *Herald* few could rival his levels of knowledge and experience as a collector and ethnographer of Australian material in the mid-nineteenth century. He came aboard with glowing testimonials from the leading scientists of the day.

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[7] David, *The Voyage of HMS Herald*, 427-428.

[8] Admiralty Instructions to Captain Denham, Public Records Office, Adm 2/1560, 292-307. In David, *The Voyage of HMS Herald*, Appendix 1, 434-437.

[9] David, *The Voyage of HMS Herald*, 4.

[10] *Ibid*, 2.

[11] *Ibid*, 435.

Although not his first choice for the position, Sir William Hooker recommended MacGillivray's appointment, writing that he thought highly of him as a naturalist and as a collector. As well as complimenting MacGillivray's geological skills, the distinguished naturalist and geologist Professor Edward Forbes wrote:

> I know no man so thoroughly fitted as yourself for such work and believe that in every branch of natural history you would turn your knowledge and observing powers to account. ...As a zoological and botanical collector I feel quite confident you have no rival.[12]

The ethnologist Robert Gordon Latham agreed:

> I think that even if a purposed Ethnologist were added to the expedition he would not be likely to do more for the Science than you have done; indeed, unless he were also a Naturalist, he would probably do less.[13]

It was the ornithologist John Gould whose praise rang loudest. Of MacGillivray's earlier collecting work he wrote:

> No collection has ever reached this country in so beautiful a state of preservation or so accurately labelled with every detail requisite in a scientific point of view...[14]

In Gould's opinion, MacGillivray's vast and unequalled knowledge of the proposed area of the survey made him uniquely qualified for the post. No one would suit the voyage so well. He continued:

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[12] Forbes to MacGillivray, January 1852: testimonial. Great Britain. Hydrographic Dept., Records M2318-2337, 1779-1918. Australian Joint Copying Project, National Library of Australia and State Library of New South Wales. Canberra: Australian Joint Copying Project, microform M2322-2324. Pre 1857 letters, f.936 (this item includes Beaufort's recommendation to appoint MacGillivray).

[13] Latham to Beaufort, 1 January 1852: testimonial. Great Britain. Hydrographic Dept., Records M2318-2337, 1779-1918. Pre 1857 letters, f.972 (this item is MacGillivray's application for the position. It includes Latham's testimonial).

[14] Gould to Beaufort, 29 December 1851, Great Britain. Hydrographic Dept., Records M2318-2337, 1779-1918. Pre 1857 letters, f.972.

> It may be thought that I am speaking too highly of Mr MacGillivray and his collections but I can safely affirm that I only speak of him and them as they deserve.[15]

Beaufort was impressed by the testimonials offered and felt that nothing could be stronger than the backing that MacGillivray had received.[16] On 23 February 1852 MacGillivray was appointed to the post at a salary of £250 a year.[17]

William Milne came aboard as Assistant Naturalist and botanical collector. William Hooker was directly involved with this appointment as he felt that botanical collecting required a dedicated post. Denham agreed and worked with Hooker in order to secure a position on board which would be partly funded by Kew and partly by the Admiralty.[18] Frederick Raynor and John Macdonald, the ship's Surgeon and Assistant Surgeon respectively, had both been instructed in natural history under the Arctic explorer Sir John Richardson at the Royal Naval Hospital at Haslar.[19] Raynor and Macdonald were keen to participate in the scientific pursuits of the voyage and to put their training to good use. Scientific interests were therefore well represented on the vessel and had an important part to play in the voyage. With the crew appointed and instructions received the *Herald* began her long journey. She set sail from Plymouth on 10 June 1852 and arrived in Sydney, which was to be the base for the duration of the voyage, eight months later on 18 February 1853.

Once in Australia Denham set about carrying out the Admiralty's instructions. An ambitious series of cruises was planned that would chart large parts of the Australian coast and islands in the south west Pacific. The *Herald*'s first cruise of almost nine months took in Lord Howe Island, the Isle of Pines and Aneityum. After visiting Sydney in July the ship returned to Lord Howe Island in August before setting sail for the Isle of Pines and Aneityum in September. The first cruise ended on 1 January 1854 and the crew had a long break of five months in Sydney before setting out on the voyage's second cruise in May 1854. Denham sailed first to New Zealand, then north to Raoul Island and then on to Fiji.

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[15] *Ibid*

[16] Beaufort. Qualifications of J. MacGillivray, 8 January 1852, Great Britain. Hydrographic Dept., Records M2318-2337, 1779-1918. Pre 1857 letters, f.936.

[17] United Kingdom Hydrographic Office, Great Britain. Hydrographic Dept., Records M2318-2337, 1779-1918. Great Britain. Hydrographic Dept., MB 23 February 1852, 7, f.414.

[18] Denham to W. Hooker, 12 March 1852, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, Records M730-788, 1793-1928. Australian Joint Copying Project, National Library of Australia and State Library of New South Wales. Canberra: Australian Joint Copying Project, microform, Kew Directors' correspondence, Vol.XXXII, f.140.

[19] David, *The Voyage of HMS Herald*, 7.

It was the unexpected and dramatic events that occurred during this second cruise that would alter the course of MacGillivray's life irrevocably. The *Herald*, Denham reported, had first sighted Fiji on the 3 September 1854. Denham's instructions were to complete large-scale surveys of specific harbours and anchorages. These would complement the surveys undertaken between 1838 and 1842 by the United States Exploring Expedition led by Lieutenant Charles Wilkes. Successful surveys were made at Moala and Gau before the *Herald* went on to survey the harbour at Levuka, the principal town of Ovalau and the centre of European trading in the islands.

While in Levuka Captain Dunn of the *Dragon* showed Captain Denham a report in the *Sydney Morning Herald* dated 16 October from Captain Truscott of the 43 ton cutter, *Oberon*.[20] Truscott outlined an elaborate trail of communications, leading to an exciting possibility. He had arrived in Sydney on 15 October 1854 from the Solomon Archipelago. During the cruise he had contact with Captain Blaxland of the *Woodlark* who reported that he, in turn, had news from the captain of another barque, the *Belle*, who stated that he had spoken to the crew of an American whaler, which had become becalmed off the island of Guadalcanal.[21] The Americans had reported that when a party had gone ashore, they had observed the name 'Benjamin Boyd' cut on nearly all the trees. Truscott's excitement grew when Blaxland reported that, when he had called at St Christopher's Island in July, he had been informed by the islanders there that they had recently been informed by people from Guadalcanal that a white man and a boy were resident on their island. The man, they reported, was tall and had a long beard. These reports threw Sydney into a state of high excitement.

Benjamin Boyd was a charismatic entrepreneur and adventurer who, it was widely presumed, had been killed on Guadalcanal in 1851. Boyd, a London stockbroker, had arrived in Australia in 1842. He immediately launched numerous business ventures and by 1844 had established himself as one of Australia's largest landholders.[22] In 1849 when

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[20] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 October 1854, 4.

[21] Guadalcanal is the largest island in the Solomons. During this period it was variously referred to as Guadarcana, Guarcana, Guadalcana, and Guadalcanar.

[22] Boyd had established the Royal Bank of Australia as a way of funding his enterprises. He added another substantial organisation to his portfolio of interests when he founded the Australian Wool Company. He established Twofold Bay in Eden as his coastal station to serve his large landholdings on the Monaro. His business ventures became so entangled and ambitious that investors grew, justifiably, alarmed. Boyd complained of the high price of labour in the colony and set about establishing some early and ambitious schemes of labour importation. These schemes, as with so many that Boyd undertook, did not bear fruit. His rise was rapid and his downfall equally swift. In 1847 the Royal Bank of Australia Board replaced him as the head of the bank with his cousin, William Sprott Boyd. Sprott Boyd, himself an investor in the Bank, quickly realised how far Benjamin's businesses were overstretched and set about winding up many of them, while carefully ensuring that he himself was not financially hurt in the process. In 1849, after striking a satisfactory

Boyd sailed out of Sydney heads in his schooner, the *Wanderer*, to try his luck on the Californian gold fields he left debts amounting to a staggering £415,780.

Failing to make his fortune in California, Boyd decided to launch himself on a cruise of the islands of the Pacific. One of his earlier ambitions had been to found his own colony in the Pacific. When previously proposed, this venture had received little or no encouragement from colonial authorities but Boyd had never quite dismissed it from his mind. John Webster, one of Boyd's companions on this, his last voyage, later explained that their object was to found a Papuan Republic or Confederation '…on which the simple machinery of an independent state might afterwards be erected.'[23]

Boyd left California on 3 June 1851 for his cruise of the Pacific in the *Wanderer*. After visiting Hawaii, the Kingsmill Islands and San Christoval, the *Wanderer* travelled to Guadalcanal, arriving on 11 October. At around 6am on the morning of 15 October, Boyd left his yacht and landed on the island accompanied only by a member of the crew, Kapentania Ponapan. His plan was to shoot some ducks before breakfast. He was seen to enter a small creek off the beach. Neither Boyd or Kapentania was ever seen again.

Shortly after Boyd left, the crew of the *Wanderer* heard two shots fired at about fifteen minutes interval. They were not alarmed by this and assumed that Boyd was merely carrying out his hunting as planned. During the morning they observed activity about the entrance to the creek. It was shortly after this that things began to go wrong. The *Wanderer* was surrounded by a number of canoes. Conflict quickly flared. Webster commented of the 'Wanderers' that they '…were, for the time, converted into as great demons as those against whom they fought.[24] When the *Wanderer*'s crew went ashore, heavily armed and fearing the worst, to search for Boyd they could find no trace of him. They set sail for Sydney in order to pass on their sad news.[25]

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deal with Sprott Boyd, Benjamin Boyd left the colony. Part of the settlement between the cousins was the retention by Benjamin Boyd of the pride of his shipping fleet, his schooner, the *Wanderer*. See Marion Diamond, *Ben Boyd of Boydtown* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1995), 185.

[23] John Webster, *The last cruise of the Wanderer* (Sydney: F. Cunninghame, 1858 or 1863), ii.

[24] Webster, *The last cruise of the Wanderer*, 114.

[25] In carrying out their 'investigations' the crew estimated that they killed approximately 25 natives, burned 50 houses and destroyed 15 canoes. In his account of the incident John Webster argued that 'The prompt chastisement of the savages of Guadalcanar by the "Wanderer", has had a beneficial effect upon their character as a people. Punishment following immediately – or at a short interval – after the commission of crime, is the only sort of punishment which Polynesians heed.' Webster, *The last cruise of the Wanderer*, 118.

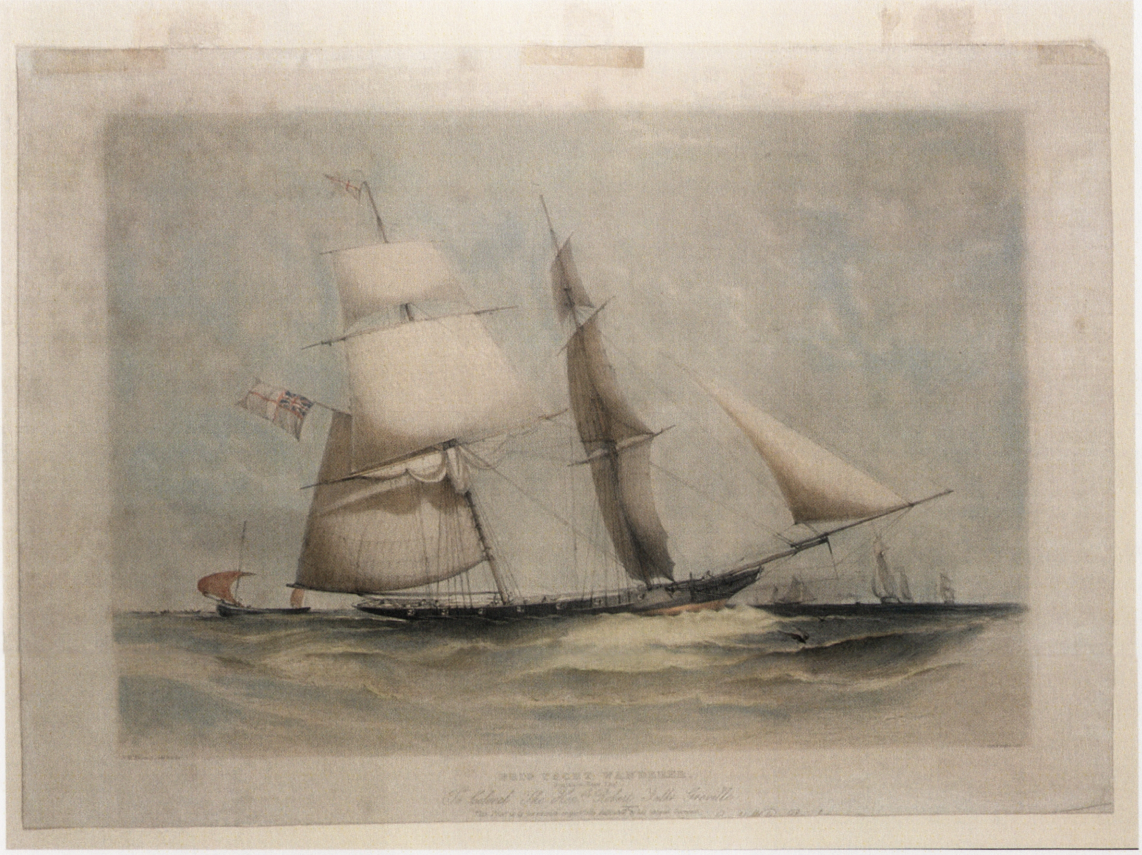
BRIG YACHT WANDERER.
To Colonel The Honble Robert Fulke Greville

Plate 4: Brig Yacht Wanderer
(Oswald Brierly. Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales)

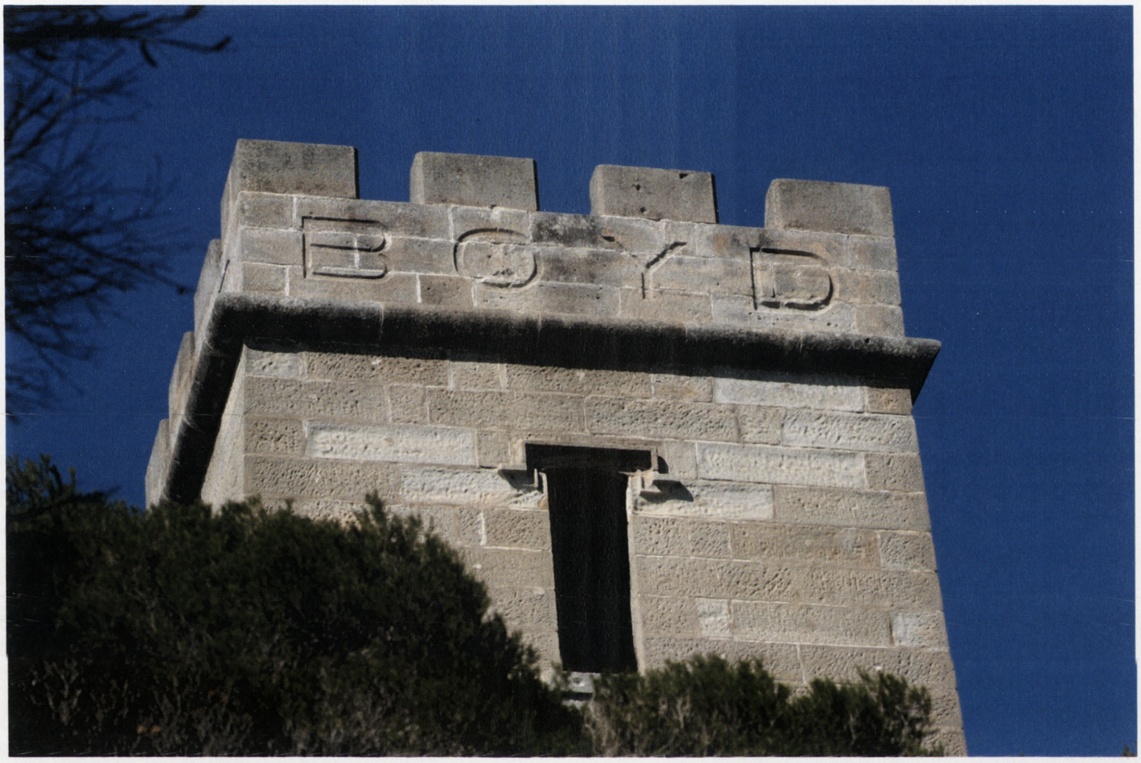

Plate 5: Boyd's Tower
Originally built as a lighthouse, this tower was designed by Oswald Brierly and built by Boyd in 1847 on Red Point, the southern headland of Twofold Bay near Boydtown, Eden. It was never used as a lighthouse but was instead used as a lookout tower by whalers.
(Photo: Kim McKenzie)

Because of the lack of eyewitnesses or a body, the exact circumstances of Boyd's presumed murder had always retained an air of mystery. What exactly had occurred on that day? If Boyd was dead, who was responsible for the killing of this charismatic and powerful individual? Or, could Boyd still be alive? Imprisoned? In need of rescue? Perhaps, some said, he was actually in hiding. Boyd's charisma and celebrity meant that there was still intense interest both in Australia and England in the exact nature of his fate. There was the added interest for a number of individuals in locating Boyd in order to resolve some of his outstanding financial dealings. Mark Boyd, Benjamin's brother, was one who was particularly concerned being unable to inherit the family estates until Boyd's death was proved.[26]

Denham had been instructed to pursue any leads regarding the fate of Boyd should they arise during his work in the region. He had on board a portrait of Boyd, which could be shown to individuals if the need or opportunity arose. Apart from his official instructions, Denham had an additional personal interest in Boyd's fate, being related to him distantly through marriage.[27] When the reports from Truscott reached him, he changed his plans, broke off his survey a month early and on 24 November, diverted the *Herald* on a new course. In following this course of action Denham was taking some risk. He could not be sure that vessels were not being sent from Sydney for the same purpose. However, his instructions had been clear – if news of Boyd was out there it was his duty to find it.

Denham sailed first to the island of San Christoval. After a short stay in the harbour of Makira, San Christoval, Denham set sail for Guadalcanal.[28] When the *Herald* reached the western point of San Christoval, two 'natives', 'Misty' and 'Friday', brought out a letter from Captain Truscott dated 16 November 1854 in which he stated that he had established that Boyd had been murdered and had bought what was said to be Boyd's skull in exchange for 20 tomahawks. Truscott had obviously been despatched quickly back to the area to verify his original story. Despite this updated news, Denham decided to pursue his own investigations. Misty and Friday had been on board the *Oberon* with Truscott and agreed to accompany Denham on the *Herald* as interpreters. On 20 December the *Herald* reached Guadalcanal, anchored near a village to the west of Cape Hunter and began inquiries.

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[26] Diamond, *Ben Boyd of Boydtown*, 209.

[27] *Ibid*, 208.

[28] The following account of the proceedings of the *Herald* is drawn from the published accounts in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Empire* (Sydney) and the journal of John MacGillivray, *Voyage of H.M.S. Herald under the command of Captain H. Mangles Denham R.N., being private Journal kept by John MacGillivray, naturalist" 21 February 1852 - January 1855*, (London : A. L. Faber Microfilm Library, [19--]).

Communication proved difficult as it quickly became clear that the interpreters from San Christoval had a very limited knowledge of the language of Guadalcanal.[29] Many people, including the chief of the village, came on board and informed Denham that Bosakau, the chief of a neighbouring tribe, had killed Boyd. Part of their proof of Bosakau's guilt was that they had stolen what they believed to be Boyd's skull from the house of Bosakau and sold it to Truscott. Many bones, said to belong to Boyd, were brought out to the *Herald* – none of them, in the opinion of those on board could possibly have belonged to that individual.[30] One of the visitors to the *Herald* was Supe, a local chief who, it was hoped, would be able to positively identify Bosakau. Supe informed the *Herald's* officers that he had witnessed the attack on Boyd and that he had first been speared and then cut down with an axe. Supe initially agreed to accompany the *Herald* on her mission but, soon after agreeing, decided against going and attempted to escape the ship by jumping out of a cabin port and climbing into one of the canoes that was still positioned alongside the ship. In the ensuing chase one of the canoes capsized and the crew of the *Herald* watched in horror as a shark devoured one of the occupants who was attempting to swim to the shore. Supe was captured and placed in irons on board the *Herald*.[31]

The *Herald* travelled the short distance to an anchorage off Wana, eight miles away. A message was sent onshore attempting to entice the chief, Bosakau, on board. Despite their best efforts he, perhaps understandably, could not be persuaded to come any closer than the side of the ship. The officers of the *Herald* attempted to capture him but he escaped and made it to shore. A number of shots were fired, one at least of which must have hit its mark, as it was reported the following day that Bosakau had died from wounds sustained during the encounter. The following day a large party from the *Herald* landed at Wanderer bay, named for Boyd's ship, and the site of his disappearance, and searched the area but found no further trace of him. Large rewards were offered for information or for items belonging to Boyd – his watch, his clothes, his gun - but they produced nothing. Items for barter including bottles, beads, axes and pipes, had been prepared with a message for Boyd in case he was still living – the message read 'HMS *Herald*, December 1854 seeking you BB – advise us quickly'. At the small village just near Cape Hunter one tomahawk was located with B.Boyd stamped on the blade but it was impossible to ascertain how or when the inhabitants of the village had obtained it.[32]

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[29] 'The late Mr B. Boyd', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 January 1855, 5.
[30] *Ibid*
[31] 'H.M.S. Herald', *Empire* (Sydney), 31 January 1855, 1.
[32] MacGillivray, *Herald Journal*, 4 January 1855, see also David, *The voyage of HMS Herald*, 140.

During this time the ship's naturalist made the best of the situation. MacGillivray's journal of his time on board the *Herald* is a comprehensive and compelling document. It is clear that MacGillivray was writing not merely for his own records detailing his own activities but also an account that he hoped would one day form the basis of the official narrative of the voyage.[33] While giving exact and meticulous descriptions of the search for Boyd his journal also detailed his collecting activities – activities he pursued at every opportunity.

Evidence that his primary interest remained unchanged during the dramatic incidents surrounding the search for Boyd is presented in his journal when describing the search made of Wanderer Bay following the conflict with Bosakau. The crew searched two villages and burned two houses, including Bosakau's hut.[34] Although MacGillivray accompanied the search party, he records his regret that his gun was not loaded with smaller shot in order to obtain specimens of the birds he observed during the excursion.[35]

Despite not being equipped on this particular occasion the period was not unprofitable for the naturalist. MacGillivray found ample material to interest him as he made a thorough documentation of the people he encountered throughout the Solomon Islands. Canoes, weapons, ornamentation, dress, physical characteristics, language, gardens, houses – all were described and differences and similarities between different tribes and regions recorded. Only a small amount of ethnographic material was added to his collection. At Makira he secured a human skull. This skull, MacGillivray stated:

> ...was the only article of plunder which I took, with the exception of some women's dresses which I found laid out to dry. I hope the ladies of the village will excuse me making so free with the linen left out on their bleaching ground.[36]

As well as these items of ethnographic 'plunder' MacGillivray made numerous additions to his natural history collections. His journal records shore excursions during which he collected a rich haul of land shells, a number of birds, fish, insects and bats.[37] He includes detailed descriptions of San Cristobal[38] and Guadalcanal in regards to mammalia, birds, reptiles, fish, mollusca, articulata and ornithoptera.[39]

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[33] Given the success of his recently released *Narrative of HMS Rattlesnake* this would have been a reasonable assumption on his part. The fact that no official narrative of the voyage of HMS *Herald* was ever written also lends weight to this assumption.

[34] MacGillivray states two huts, Denham says only Bosakau's hut was burned. David, *The voyage of HMS Herald*, 134.

[35] MacGillivray, *Herald Journal*, 24 December 1854.

[36] MacGillivray, *Herald Journal*, 23 December 1854.

[37] See MacGillivray, *Herald Journal*, 26 December 1854 and 28 December 1845.

[38] Now called Makira.

As well as a record of collecting, MacGillivray's journal is also notable for the increasingly apparent tension between himself and his Captain. One Sunday morning MacGillivray scathingly commented 'A pretty day of rest this. I never saw a ship's company harder worked than today from 5am until 12.30pm'. His sympathy for the crew was even greater as the work was conducted 'under a burning sun with scarcely a breath of air on board, or in the awningless boats, and in the midst of contradictory orders delivered in a tone between a screech and a yell'.[40]

In other entries MacGillivray criticised Denham's judgement in onshore dealings with the inhabitants of the Solomon Islands during which MacGillivray clearly felt that Denham was putting his crew at risk.[41] MacGillivray was obviously also dissatisfied with the quality of navigation on various occasions.[42] By the end of January MacGillivray's scorn was scarcely concealed. As the vessel paused on its way back to Sydney to survey a reef another vessel was observed passing. MacGillivray commented that:

> ...although no boat was sent from the ship in consequence of special orders – yet very fortunately one of the surveying boats did so, and we had the pleasure – of which "Pecksniff" would have deprived us – of getting newspapers...[43]

The search for answers regarding Boyd had taken the *Herald* close to three months. The long detour could not have been said to have supplied any conclusive evidence regarding Boyd's fate and the unplanned extension to the *Herald*'s cruise had badly affected the health of the crew. Another worry for Denham was the escape during the *Herald*'s visit to Guadalcanal on the evening of 29 December of a convict, Dennis Griffiths, who had been apprehended in Viti Levu. Griffiths was to have been taken to Sydney to be charged with piracy for his participation in the mutiny on board the government barque *Lady Franklin* on which he was being transported to Norfolk Island. Despite extensive searches and the offer of large rewards, no trace of Griffiths could be found.[44]

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[39] MacGillivray, *Herald Journal*. These sections are undated. Interestingly he has made spaces to include sections on botany and geology but they have been left blank. This is a clear reflection of his personal interests and strengths.

[40] MacGillivray, *Herald Journal*, 17 December 1854.

[41] For example see MacGillivray, *Herald Journal*, 24 December 1855, 'Captain Denham seemed anxious to visit and examine the houses, but to have done so with our small force would have been highly imprudent.'

[42] For example see MacGillivray, *Herald Journal*, 4 January 1855, 'As usual, instead of being off Cape Hunter at daylight in order to land a shore party at 6am, we were 7 or 8 miles off, and soon afterwards got becalmed.'

[43] MacGillivray, *Herald Journal*, 22 January 1855. (Pecksniff refers to the Charles Dickens character from Martin Chuzzlewit).

On 30 January 1855 the *Herald* anchored in Farm Cove. They sailed into a heatwave. The *Sydney Morning Herald* commented that 'A canopy of red-hot brass seemed to glow over the devoted city'.[45] For a week Sydney had been subjected to temperatures of over 40 degrees. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that over thirty residents had succumbed to the heat and died.[46]

As the *Herald's* company sweated in the heat the day after their arrival, an account of the cruise of the *Herald* and the search for Boyd was published in the *Sydney Morning Herald.*[47] The article described the movements and actions of the *Herald's* entire cruise. It outlined the search they had undertaken for Boyd and detailed their findings in Guadalcanal. Much to Denham's surprise, the same day an anonymous, and obviously pre-prepared, account of their cruise also appeared in the rival Sydney paper, the *Empire.*[48] Denham read the anonymous account with horror. It was certain that a member of the *Herald's* crew had written this unauthorised and mysterious piece. As well as painting a far fuller and more frank account of the *Herald's* adventures than the *Sydney Morning Herald* article, it cast doubt on the worth of their endeavours, the way in which they had been carried out and also on Denham's abilities as a Captain.

The article highlighted the reliance that had been placed on evidence gathered through the local population. The anonymous author stated that:

> It may be mentioned, as the expressed opinion of persons qualified to judge, that every particle of information derived by the *Herald* through the medium of imperfect interpretation from the people of Guadalcanar – notorious liars as they proved themselves to be – should be received with extreme caution.[49]

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[44] In *Boyd of Boydtown* Marion Diamond cites an unpublished article written by Father Kerry F. Prendeville 'Memories Around a Village Water Supply: A Story of Benjamin Boyd and the Ghari People of Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands, unpublished typescript, February 1987. This article gathers together the oral traditions of the Ghari people of Guadalcanal in the 1970s. The information gathered indicates that Boyd was murdered because he entered into an area which was taboo for men and that he also came to the back of the village into the area used by women as a latrine area. These same oral traditions indicate that Dennis Griffiths may have survived and have become known as Dani, living happily among the people of Veuru for many years until a rat bite led to his death.

[45] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 February 1855, 4.

[46] *Ibid*

[47] 'The Late Mr B. Boyd', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 January 1855, 5.

[48] 'H.M.S Herald', *Empire* (Sydney), 31 January 1855, 1.

[49] *Ibid*

The account went further; stating that the evidence gathered was also of entirely negative nature and served only to confirm presumptions already widely held regarding Boyd's death. The final insult to Denham was in the concluding passage in which the author stated that:

> With a crew debilitated by the effects of an eight months' cruise, and a large proportion of the working hands unable to do duty from sickness, chiefly various forms of scurvy, it will take some time before fresh meat and vegetables, and a run on shore, will have made "Jack himself again."[50]

This criticism of Denham's lack of care for his own crew was bad enough, however Denham's horror intensified two days later with the publication of a letter in the *Empire* signed E.S. Hill in response to the anonymous account. This letter was even more overtly critical of Denham's activities stating that 'The entire proceedings of the *Herald* on this mission are unsatisfactory, and leave much room for censure'.[51] Hill's letter criticised Denham's actions on a range of fronts in no uncertain terms. He quipped that they would have been as likely to procure effective interpreters from Tanna as from the Isle of Skye. He bemoaned the escape of the prisoner, Dennis Griffiths, who, he argued, would assist the 'natives' in any actions against future parties. In particular, the actions taken by the *Herald* were seen by the author to have endangered any other parties now wishing to conduct their own enquiries in the area. The hopes that had been held for a rescue of Boyd, appeared to Hill to have been completely blighted.[52]

The strong reaction to the accounts of the proceedings of the *Herald* is more comprehensible when the mood and actions of the Sydney population in the months prior to the *Herald*'s arrival are considered. Like Denham, many people in Sydney had read Truscott's reports regarding Boyd in October and had determined that immediate action was required. Before Truscott's reports had reached Denham in Fiji, meetings in Sydney had already been held, committees formed, letters written. Many individuals in Sydney had their own ideas about how a search should be conducted and were busy making plans regarding Boyd's rescue. Captain Denham acted in ignorance of this activity and agitation. He had no way of knowing what was suggested or planned back in Australia – when he received the information regarding Boyd he simply followed his instructions, did what he could and then sailed back into controversy.

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[50] *Ibid*

[51] E.S. Hill, 'The Fate of Mr. Boyd - to the Editor of the Empire', *Empire* (Sydney), 2 February 1855, 4.

[52] *Ibid*

The author of the damning letter was Edward Smith Hill (1819-1880), a wine and spirit merchant with a keen interest in natural history. He was part of a prominent Sydney family connected through marriage to the Wentworths and the Coopers. Both of Hill's brothers were magistrates and all three were active members of the Sydney business community. Like Boyd, the Hill brothers had, in 1849, attempted an expedition to the Californian goldfields. Hill had been an active member of a group of concerned Sydney residents that had been agitating for government assistance in the search for Boyd following the reports received from the *Oberon*. While the *Herald* had been pursuing the case in the Solomons, public speculation and interest in the fate of Boyd had continued to be a key topic of discussion and debate among the Sydney population.

A large public meeting had been convened at the Sydney Exchange rooms (by kind permission of the Sydney Exchange Company) on 19 October 1854 to consider a number of issues of public concern – one of the chief of these was what action the government would be taking in the search for Boyd.[53] Many of Sydney's most prominent business and community figures were present including Benjamin Darly, Alexander Campbell and Frederick Ebsworth. One of the most vocal members of the meeting was Captain Robert Towns (1794-1873). Towns was a trader and entrepreneur and long time rival of Boyd. Towns had a number of business interests in common with Boyd, most notably attempts at setting up systems of importation of cheap labour. Towns was also one of Australia's most successful sandalwood and trepang traders and had business interests scattered throughout Australia and the islands of the Pacific.[54]

It was reported at the meeting that the senior naval officer in Sydney, Captain Fitzgerald, believed that the best plan would be to send a steamer to investigate the matter. HMS *Torch* was the suggested vessel. Companies such as the Australian Steam Navigation Company made offers of other vessels such as the *Melbourne*. Other parties suggested that Captain Truscott in the *Oberon* should immediately return.

It was felt by many at the meeting at the Exchange rooms that the delay in sending the *Torch* was unacceptable. Alexander Campbell addressed the meeting and stated:

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[53] 'Yesterday's Meetings at the Sydney Exchange Rooms', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 October 1854, 5.
[54] For a comprehensive examination of the entire Sandalwood industry and Robert Towns' career See Dorothy Shineberg, *They Came for Sandalwood: A Study of the Sandalwood Trade in the South-West Pacific 1830-1865* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1967).

> The public could not wait one day. Was a delay of fourteen days to be allowed when it was believed by practical men that Mr. Boyd was in the hands of cannibals? No. ... If the Executive, upon being urged to allow of no delay, refused to give up their plan, the public themselves must do what was imperatively necessary to attempt to rescue Mr. Boyd or ascertain his fate.[55]

A delegation was appointed by those at the meeting to liaise with the Executive Council regarding the meeting's proposals concerning the search for Boyd. Hill was one of those named.

Before the meeting at the Sydney Exchange considered the news the *Oberon* brought regarding the fate of Benjamin Boyd, they had considered another issue of concern to the Sydney business community – the fate of Captain John Ross of the *Black Dog*. Ross's story had a particular relevance to Denham because Hill, in his letter to the *Empire*, had likened the *Herald's* shooting of the chief, Busakau, with the actions of the sandalwooding trader, Captain John Ross.

On 1 February 1854, Ross, an employee of Captain Towns, had murdered a Lifuan boy, 'Lifou Charley', at Tuperama, New Caledonia. Ross had ordered that Lifou Charley be hanged during hostilities, it was said, in order to dissuade further attacks by *'intimidating the enemy'*.[56] Conflicting evidence was given during the trial concerning the exact course of events, however it was suggested that the killing was motivated more by revenge for the earlier killing of another sandalwood trader than for reasons of self-defence.[57] Ross was tried and sentenced to death for the boy's murder. Hill's letter stated:

> It was not absolutely necessary to take that boy's life, and for which act Ross now suffers incarceration. But how much less the necessity for taking the life, or even shooting the chief Basakou! For that one life of their chief, it can scarcely be calculated the number of victims which will be required for atonement; every means, every stratagem, that savage ingenuity can invent will henceforth be directed against the crews of vessels visiting that place.[58]

To Denham the parallel made by Hill between his actions and those of Ross would have been shocking. To have his actions compared to those of the notoriously ruthless and violent sandalwood traders would have been anathema to him. He had conducted an official investigation at the behest of his superiors and had attempted to serve justice in some measure. Ross had murdered a native in cold blood during a fight and in dubious circumstances.

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[55] 'Yesterday's Meetings at the Sydney Exchange Rooms', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 October 1854, 5.

[56] Shineberg, *They Came for Sandalwood*, 94. Shineberg uses James Ross. All other accounts use John Ross.

[57] 'Law, Supreme Court. Monday. Sittings in Banco. Before the Full Court. The Queen V. Ross', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 October 1854, 4.

[58] E.S. Hill, 'The Fate of Mr. Boyd - to the Editor of the Empire', *Empire* (Sydney), 2 February 1855, 4.

Ross's case was the talk of Sydney when Truscott arrived in Sydney in October with the news regarding Boyd. There was considerable public agitation regarding the imposition of the death penalty. Public sympathy was certainly on Ross's side in this matter. It was felt that, although it was not strictly necessary to kill the boy, Ross's actions may have saved his vessel and his crew. During the meeting at the Exchange the chair of the meeting, Mr Weekes, attempted to illustrate Ross's plight.

> He, Mr. Weekes, would beg of the meeting to consider, that although the life of a black was as dear as that of a white man, and fully entitled to the protection of the law; yet that in such a position as Captain Ross found himself, (his crew and his vessel being surrounded and attacked by hordes of blood-thirsty savages) it was surely due and just to him to consider, with care and lenity, the extremities to which a master of a vessel might be driven under such circumstances. (Loud cries of hear).[59]

A central issue in the debates concerning Boyd, Ross and subsequently the actions of Denham and the *Herald*, was the correct way to 'deal' with native populations. When the crew of the *Wanderer* had first returned to Australia bringing their sad news, there had been some thought that their violent actions may have contributed to Boyd's supposed death. There were even some who suggested that the crew may have been involved in Boyd's disappearance. Establishing peaceful relationships with local populations was seen as an important part of trade and commerce in the islands. Some argued that violence would only reap violence. The *Sydney Morning Herald* for example argued 'Those who on slight provocation use deadly weapons may themselves escape vengeance, but they involve others, innocent of their conduct, in the sad consequences of their guilt'.[60]

It was a far cry from the attitude and actions of the crew of the *Wanderer* in Guadalcanal in 1851. Strategy rather than force, it was argued, was the key to establishing good relations and would be the only way in which Boyd's fate might be ascertained.

At the conclusion of the meeting at the Sydney Exchange on 19 October, as well as being appointed to the deputation formed regarding the search for Boyd, Hill was also nominated as a member of the committee which would carry out the distribution of copies of a petition in support of Ross to be presented to his Excellency, the Governor General, Sir Charles Augustus FitzRoy. The petition carried the names of 'Members of the Legislative Council, merchants, traders, masters of vessels and other citizens of Sydney'.[61] The presence of Hill on committees both for the search for Boyd and the clemency for Ross is ironic given the accusations in his letter regarding Denham's actions.

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[59] 'Yesterday's Meetings at the Sydney Exchange Rooms', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 October 1854, 5.

[60] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 December 1854, 4.

Four days after the meeting, on 23 October the *Oberon* departed to continue investigations, having been fitted out at private expense. It was argued by those undertaking the mission that there had been sufficient support for such an action and it was assumed that the government would reimburse the costs of the mission as soon as was practicable.[62] It was on this voyage that Truscott procured the skull he believed to be Boyd's. Feeling that he had confirmed Boyd's fate and also fearing retribution for the skull having been taken, he quickly returned to Sydney, anchoring on 3 December 1854. The skull he had purchased was presented for expert examination and Truscott informed Sydney that he now believed he had obtained conclusive evidence that Boyd was dead.

Debates in Sydney continued to rage despite the return of Truscott with what was claimed to be Boyd's skull. Three days after his return on 6 December, a letter appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* from William Sheridan Wall, the curator of the Australian Museum. Wall had been presented with the skull and, along with several doctors who had examined the item, was unconvinced. Wall announced to Sydney that in his opinion the skull was not that of a Caucasian. Nor, he argued, did the skull bear any sign that it had been kept in one of the sacred canoe houses. These skulls, he argued, were regularly anointed with coconut oil and kept under cover. The skull he had examined had clearly been exposed to the elements and was probably picked up by the 'natives' from the beach in order to gain prized tomahawks. These duplicitous savages, Wall stated, had imposed upon Truscott, little knowing how easily 'science would expose their lie'.[63]

Further debate ensued when on 18 December the *Sydney Morning Herald* announced that the government-sponsored voyage to search for Boyd would not be undertaken until April.

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[61] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 October 1854, 5. Ross's sentence was eventually commuted to life imprisonment, a term of which he served only two years.

[62] When the *Oberon* returned, Captain Towns, who had acted as guarantor, quickly applied to the NSW Government for the sum of £300 which had been incurred in fitting out the vessel. The government refused to pay. The dispute over this expense lasted for over two years when the NSW Legislature finally voted to agree to pay the sum. J.H. Watson, *Benjamin Boyd, Merchant, Adventurer and Pioneer, Founder of Boydtown, Twofold Bay* (Sydney: c.1907).

[63] Sheridan Wall, 'Remarks on the Supposed Skull of B. Boyd, Esq. – To the Editor of the Sydney Morning Herald', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 December 1854, 5.

The reasons given for this delay were that, the suspicions of the 'natives' having now been aroused, a quick return would only increase the likelihood of their becoming more guarded. The onset of the hurricane season was the other reason that the voyage had been postponed.[64]

It was in this context that the news reached Sydney that HMS *Herald* had changed her plans in order to undertake investigations in the area. Plans made in Sydney were put on hold and those concerned with Boyd's fate waited anxiously for further news. When Denham sailed into Sydney in January 1855 his findings were eagerly awaited and his actions ready to be scrutinized. Many prominent Sydney figures had their own thoughts and opinions regarding the search for Boyd and were prepared to voice them loudly and publicly.

The publication of the anonymous article and the subsequent public criticism of his actions left Denham deeply troubled and shaken. Denham confided his anxiety to Captain Stephen Fremantle, in February 1855. Fremantle, Captain of HMS *Juno,* had arrived in Sydney in early February 1855 and assumed the post of Senior Naval Officer for the Australia station. In this position he was the chief representative of the Royal Navy in the Colony and operationally in charge of the conduct of whatever Navy ships might be present. In Sydney Fremantle soon made the acquaintance of Denham. Fremantle found Denham agreeable company and a clever man.[65] The two found each other pleasant, likeable and trustworthy companions and were to remain firm friends for the rest of their lives.

It was to Fremantle, as a friend, and as the most senior officer in Sydney at the time, that Denham confided his difficulties and sought his advice and assistance in this deeply troubling matter. Fremantle found Denham seriously depressed by the situation and 'withering under the sting of the Empire's calumny'.[66] He felt that immediate leave was essential if Denham was to overcome these very public setbacks.[67] Fremantle granted

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[64] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 December 1854, 4.

[65] Fremantle to Lady Fremantle, 23 February 1855, Fremantle Family Papers, Buckinghamshire County Records Office, D/FR/43, Bundle L.

[66] 'Report of an Enquiry upon Mr MacGillivray, 26 April 1855', National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, FRE/205. Fremantle composed this official report into MacGillivray's dismissal. In it he addressed MacGillivray's offences on a point-by-point basis. He examines the letter written by MacGillivray to the *Empire* and refutes the charges contained therein. This report also includes copies of various letters referred to throughout the dismissal proceedings. The other main source of information regarding MacGillivray's dismissal is a private letter from Fremantle to Sir Francis Beaufort. Fremantle to Beaufort, 1 May 1855, Great Britain. Hydrographic Dept., Records M2318-2337, 1779-1918. Pre 1857 letters, f.358. This letter goes into greater descriptive detail and contains copies of all associated correspondence including letters from MacGillivray to Denham and Cuming to Denham.

[67] 'Report of an Enquiry upon Mr MacGillivray, 26 April 1855', National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, FRE/205.

Denham local leave in order to recover his health and equilibrium. Denham commenced a tour of NSW with the Speaker of the NSW Legislature, Sir Charles Nicholson. He returned to the *Herald* in early April, refreshed from his time away from the ship. His renewed sense of calm and equilibrium was not to last long.

On 20 April John MacGillivray presented Denham with a letter. In the letter he accused Denham of deliberately publishing under his own name, an account titled 'Further observations on St Paul's Island' in the *Nautical Magazine*, 1854. To some extent this allegation was true. The account was taken from a report written by MacGillivray. The misattribution of authorship may have been in part MacGillivray's own fault for failing to sign the article when sending it to the Hydrographic Office.[68] Whatever the truth of the accusation, the issue was enough to bring matters, which had been brewing for many months, to a head between the two men. It was during the heated confrontation regarding the publication of the St Paul Island paper that, it is stated, MacGillivray acknowledged himself as the author of the anonymous article in the *Empire*. Denham immediately consulted his friend and superior, Fremantle, about the dispute and laid all the matters out before him. This, Fremantle reported, was the first time that Denham confided his long-term difficulties with his naturalist to him. Denham told Fremantle that he had been prepared, for the sake of 'the interests of science', to tolerate MacGillivray's presence on board the *Herald* despite knowing that he was 'dissolute, deceitful and repulsive'[69], but in exposing his Captain to public ridicule he had, in this instance, gone too far. In response to Denham's concerns, Fremantle convened an enquiry into MacGillivray's conduct to be held on 25 April.

As the most senior officer in Sydney at the time, Fremantle headed up the enquiry with Denham assisting. John Henn Gennys, of HMS *Fantome*, was the third member of the board. The three considered a range of charges against MacGillivray but the exact nature of the hearings and MacGillivray's defence, if he presented any, are not known. It would appear however that it was conducted in open session with the officers of the *Herald* present[70] and that it lasted for a period of three days.[71]

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[68] David, *The Voyage of HMS Herald*, 162. A copy of MacGillivray's letter is part of the report Fremantle sent to Sir Francis Beaufort regarding MacGillivray's dismissal.

[69] 'Report of an Enquiry upon Mr MacGillivray, 26 April 1855', National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, FRE/205.

[70] *Ibid*

[71] Milne to W Hooker, 17 May 1855, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Directors' correspondence 1855, Vol. XXXV, f.318.

The most serious of the charges, in the view of Fremantle, related to the publication of the article in the *Empire*. Fremantle stated that the article contained 'insinuations, inaccuracies and other disparaging passages, which exposed Captain Denham to the most unmerited reproach and cruel insult'.[72] Fremantle stated that Hill's letter had insinuated 'that the most atrocious crime which man can perpetrate might be imputed to the conduct of her Commander'.[73] During the hearings MacGillivray is said to have insisted on the truth of his article and boldly asserted his right to publish as he pleased in his capacity as a civilian.[74]

Fremantle also accused MacGillivray of reneging on promises made to Denham concerning access to material written by the naturalist while on board the ship. In Fremantle's accounts of the enquiry he was clearly shocked by MacGillivray's defence regarding this material. MacGillivray, Fremantle reports, was quite open about being desperate to obtain the position of naturalist on board the *Herald* and that the promises made to Denham concerning total access to his writings and journals needed to be viewed in that light. Fremantle stated that during the enquiry into his conduct MacGillivray had the audacity to admit, in front of the board and all of his messmates, that these were promises that he had had no intention of honouring once he secured the position on board the *Herald*.[75] Correspondence attached to Fremantle's report to Beaufort regarding MacGillivray's dismissal includes the letter from MacGillivray – dated 18 April 1855 - in which he levels his accusations against Denham regarding the St Paul's article. MacGillivray wrote that his own plans to publish an account of the natural history of the voyage would be damaged by Denham's pre-emptive actions. Fremantle also included a copy of MacGillivray's application to Denham for the post of naturalist on board the *Herald* sent in January 1852. In the application he makes it clear in offering to write a narrative or connected account of the voyage that he would understand that all of his writings would be placed at Denham's disposal, made accessible at all times and that Denham would be free to deal with all this material as he thought proper.[76]

This deceit, according to Fremantle, was just the first in a catalogue of complaints against the *Herald*'s naturalist. A further charge laid against MacGillivray related to the distribution of the collections made during his appointment. It was stated that MacGillivray had sold parts of his natural history collection for his own gain. During the hearing, a fellow officer stated that he had seen a letter from a person in Edinburgh '...acknowledging the receipt of a quantity of valuable specimens.' In recounting this portion of the hearing to Beaufort, Fremantle continued, 'The inference was obvious, and Mr MacGillivray looked confounded'.[77]

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[72] Fremantle to Beaufort, 1 May 1855, Great Britain. Hydrographic Dept., Records M2318-2337, 1779-1918. Pre 1857 letters, f.358.

[73] 'Report of an Enquiry upon Mr MacGillivray, 26 April 1855', National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, FRE/205.

[74] *Ibid*

[75] *Ibid*

[76] *Ibid*

There is evidence to suggest that MacGillivray may have sold some botanical specimens from the *Herald*'s voyage to the British Museum.[78] There certainly evidence that MacGillivray felt at liberty to dispose of his collections as he saw fit, a belief he demonstrates in a letter to John Edward Gray, Keeper of Zoology at the British Museum, written by MacGillivray in March 1855, just prior to the enquiry. The letter also demonstrates a personal bitterness towards Captain Denham. MacGillivray informed Gray:

> Either enter the specimens sent as being presented by me or not as you please – at any rate captain Denham has nothing whatever to do with them – I am not tied down by my employers (the L^s C^s of the Admiralty) in any way and am fully entitled to act according to my own judgement in distributing the Gov^t Collection. In the Meantime you are fully entitled (as far as my permission goes) to describe any novelty which may present itself among the specimens now sent.[79]

William Milne, who had been appointed as an Assistant Naturalist on the *Herald* with specific collecting responsibilities for Hooker at Kew, wrote to Hooker in October 1856 with his own allegations against MacGillivray on the matter of disposal of collections. Milne insisted:

> ...I am aware he used all his efforts to be my destruction with you and others he went even so far as to advise me to send private collections to London for sale: I did not comply with his wishes I know if I was to do so I would be doing wrong. Therefore I resisted his wicked temptation. I know from his own statements, he was always in the habit of sending collections of shells, botnay [sic] etc to partys [sic] in or about London and receiving returns in money. I would not have said this much about Mr McGry: had it not been to vindicate my own just cause...[80]

Milne also attacked MacGillivray's conduct onboard the vessel telling Hooker that he was rarely up and about before nine or ten in the morning and scarcely went above two miles from the ship on any of his excursions. MacGillivray was also, Milne insisted, unable to attend to his own collections, as he was constantly in a state of intoxication.[81] He relied, Milne alleged, on Milne's duplicates to build his collection and was possessed of that 'scotch doggedness that would not scruple to tell any amount of falsehood to forward his own interests'.[82]

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[77] *Ibid*

[78] David, *The Voyage of HMS Herald*, 163. David states that the accession records at the British Museum lists 795 plants collected by MacGillivray were purchased between 1855-1863. This may in fact be evidence of MacGillivray's later collecting activities rather than misconduct during the voyage of the *Herald*.

[79] MacGillivray to Gray, 5 March 1855, Natural History Museum Archives, DE200/146, f.126.

[80] Milne to W. Hooker, 11 October 1856, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Australian Letters 1851-1858, Vol. LXXIV (III).

Milne's allegations, made as they were well after the enquiry, and in response to a chiding letter from Hooker regarding the quality of Milne's collections compared to those of MacGillivray, must be treated with extreme caution. In 1855 Milne's earlier tone was considerably different as he lamented that he was 'one of those that regrets his [MacGillivray's] loss he was allways [sic] a good kind and obliging friend to me…'[83] By October 1856 Milne's situation had changed and he was having difficulties of his own. If making allegations against MacGillivray would help him out of these troubles then he would do whatever was necessary. In 1858 Milne eventually resigned in order to be spared the indignity of being dismissed for incompetence. Denham, always a keen supporter of Milne, wrote to Hooker insisting that he hoped that on his return to England Milne would be able to 'give you evidence of his zeal and industry if not of skill…'[84]

A further allegation heard during the enquiry related to MacGillivray's financial dealings. As they were outlined by Fremantle these were serious charges. Documents attached to Fremantle's account as well as Denham's account of the dismissal to Hooker, indicate that MacGillivray was in serious financial difficulty upon his appointment to the position on board the *Herald*. MacGillivray had sought help from Denham and had requested that one of his quarterly bills in each year should be made out to his principal creditor, a Mr Best from Aberdeen, and another would go to the celebrated shell collector Hugh Cuming who had undertaken to support MacGillivray's wife and children during his absence. Denham agreed to this proposal and wrote to both men assuring them that their financial requirements would be met. The copies of letters attached to Fremantle's report to Beaumont indicate that the arrangement did not work out as agreed. Both Best and

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[81] *Ibid*

[82] As a source of information regarding the quality of work of a collector Milne is suspect. It is clear his own collecting skills were of a very low quality. He was himself almost dismissed for incompetence later in the voyage. Denham stepped in and saw that he was permitted to resign rather than be further disgraced.

[83] Milne to W. Hooker, 17 May 1855, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Directors' correspondence 1855, Vol. XXXV, f.318. In a letter to William Hooker in 1854 MacGillivray reported Milne's incompetence saying: 'Milne has been as industrious as usual but his zeal to collect far outruns his ability to preserve. I have seen the result of 3 days collecting – about a cartload – produce for the herbarium only a few ferns – the rest being spoiled. MacGillivray to W. Hooker, 6 December 1854, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, Records M730-788, 1793-1928. Canberra: Australian Joint Copying Project.

[84] David, *The Voyage of HMS Herald*, 312.

Cuming had cause to write to Denham as they had not received the agreed sums. In the case of Best, a letter from his agent indicates that before MacGillivray's appointment to the *Herald*, Best was on the point of instituting proceedings against him and that it was only Denham's letter that caused him to desist. Best's agents made one of the most serious charges in this matter alleging that MacGillivray went so far as to alter the name on a pay bill after it had been made out by Denham. The letter insisted that Denham immediately remit to Mr Best at Aberdeen two bills for £60.13.7.[85] Best's agent stated that unless their demands were met that they would be forced to apply to the Admiralty to make good their losses.

Denham also received a letter in the same vein from Hugh Cuming seeking his help in acquitting MacGillivray's debts.[86] Cuming complained that despite Denham's promise to him before leaving England that one of MacGillivray's quarterly pay bills each year would be endorsed to Cuming, he had only received one such payment over a year and a half before. These payments were to be made in order that Cuming could maintain MacGillivray's wife, Williamina, and children during MacGillivray's absence. Williamina, had given birth to their third child, William, after the *Herald* departed in 1852 and Cuming complained that this, as well as high prices for provisions in London meant that he was forced to advance her significantly more money than he had been provided with by this single payment. The picture of MacGillivray's disastrous financial position is given when Cuming states that he also paid off all of MacGillivray's debts except one due to 'a party in Aberdeen' (presumably Mr Best) and that he paid to outfit MacGillivray for the voyage leaving the naturalist owing him over £200. All of this help and kindness had been provided, he stated, to keep MacGillivray and his family from a state of utter destitution despite the fact that they were only acquaintances of a few months standing.[87] Cuming was, in this respect, exaggerating, as MacGillivray's correspondence from as early as 1846 mentions meeting Cuming at John Gould's house while he waited in London to hear if he had successfully won the position of naturalist on board HMS *Rattlesnake*.[88] Cuming apologised to Denham for bothering him with his and MacGillivray's affairs but stated that he felt that Denham was the only man who would be able to have sufficient influence to ensure MacGillivray carried out his obligations.[89]

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[85] Fremantle to Beaufort, 1 May 1855, United Kingdom Hydrographic Office, Pre 1857 in-letters, f.358.

[86] A copy of this letter is contained in Fremantle's letter to Beaufort. Fremantle to Beaufort, 1 May 1855, United Kingdom Hydrographic Office, Pre 1857 in-letters, f.358.

[87] *Ibid*

[88] MacGillivray to Harley, August 4, 1846, Harley Correspondence, Leicester and Rutland Record Office, 13D56/7, f.54.

Given what is known of MacGillivray's earlier financial dealings and difficulties, it is entirely likely that these allegations were not only true but also that they were not his only misdemeanours of this nature. Cuming's irritation however may also have stemmed from a dispute with MacGillivray regarding specimens Cuming felt had been promised to him. In a letter from MacGillivray to Cuming in February MacGillivray was forced to refute Cuming's allegation that he had been selling specimens to other parties in England (a Mr Stevens).[90] MacGillivray's defence to Cuming was that Milne had given shells from the Isle of Pines, Aneityum and Lord Howe Islands to James Fowler Wilcox, a former shipmate of MacGillivray's from the *Rattlesnake* who now owned a natural history shop in Sydney. As Milne was, in MacGillivray's words, 'a mere gardener and nothing else', MacGillivray stated that he was in the habit of writing the names of all of the natural history objects on Milne's boxes for him.[91] This, MacGillivray argued, would account for specimens appearing to have been transmitted to other people from him. This account appears an unlikely one. Far more believable is that MacGillivray kept duplicate material and gave (or sold) them to his old friend Wilcox when the opportunity arose and was indeed involved in selling specimens to various parties in England.

Insult, injury, insubordination – MacGillivray, according to Fremantle and Denham, simply had to go. If these were his only offences they were reason enough. But it appeared that MacGillivray had no redeeming feature. His character was so dreadful, his nature so degraded, that he had no place on board a Royal Navy vessel. Feelings regarding MacGillivray ran high. Fremantle's and Denham's correspondence both contain blistering attacks on every aspect of his character and professionalism. Fremantle wrote that he was:

> Base minded, deceitful and a self seeking intruder … in his general habits, there is no redeeming point, he is a determined drunkard, and mixes only in the lowest society. It has been the astonishment of the respected people of Sydney how so profligate a character known thro' his antecedent in the *Rattlesnake* could have been tolerated so long on board a Man-of-War in a gentleman's mess.[92]

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[89] Fremantle to Beaufort, 1 May 1855, United Kingdom Hydrographic Office, Pre 1857 in-letters, f.358.

[90] MacGillivray to Cuming, 14 February 1855, Thomas Eyton Papers, American Philosophical Society Library, Philadelphia, B Ey83.

[91] *Ibid*

[92] Fremantle to Beaufort, 1 May 1855. United Kingdom Hydrographic Office, Pre 1857 in-letters, f.358.

MacGillivray had aroused strong passions in Denham, Fremantle and Milne. As well as cataloguing his defects and offences from this voyage there was a concerted attack on his character in general. Amongst others, Sir Everard Home and Phillip Parker King, were said to have been insulted by MacGillivray. MacGillivray, they argued, was known to have been unsatisfactory in all of his past voyages. In his letter to Hooker Denham stated that he had now been informed that MacGillivray's conduct toward Captain Owen Stanley while on board the *Rattlesnake* was infamous and that he had also behaved notoriously badly with Captain Blackwood on the *Fly*.[93] His supporters back in England could be left in no doubt. This was not an isolated case. MacGillivray's career had been filled with such offences and his behaviour could no longer be tolerated.

Fremantle felt that MacGillivray was the principal source of a general amount of ill-feeling towards Denham and that his attitude towards his Captain was entirely unsatisfactory. His constant undermining of authority, Fremantle argued, would permeate throughout the crew, poisoning the atmosphere and casting a pall over the entire proceedings of the voyage. Given the generosity shown by Denham towards MacGillivray in settling debts and clearing the path for his appointment to the *Herald*, Fremantle speculated that MacGillivray's hatred of Denham could only be that of the kind that is borne out of feelings of deep obligation.[94] Throughout the enquiry Fremantle detected what he felt was a disturbing amount of sympathy for MacGillivray among his messmates. They tended towards siding with MacGillivray and were reluctant to speak against someone they perceived as one of their own. This stemmed, Fremantle argued, from the ridiculous notion that 'their Gunroom was their castle' and that what went on there was not to be spoken of to those outside.[95] Despite all his faults therefore, MacGillivray was still seen to be one of the ship's company, by his messmates at least.

Instant dismissal from the service was the court of enquiry's verdict. On the 26 April 1855, John MacGillivray's career as a naturalist employed on the surveying vessels of the Royal Navy came to an abrupt and unfortunate end. In summing up Fremantle stated he was of:

> ...the firm conviction that it would be no longer consistent with the honour and dignity of the navy nor creditable to science in any branch, that Mr MacGillivray should continue on board the *Herald*. I believe that the ultimate success of the

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[93] Denham to W. Hooker, 27 April 1855, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew Directors' correspondence Vol. XXXV, f.134.

[94] 'Report of an Enquiry upon Mr MacGillivray, 26 April 1855', National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, FRE/205.

[95] *Ibid*

> expedition would be endangered and the general discipline and best interests of the service would be injured.[96]

Fremantle's vehemence is perhaps better understood in the context of the broader concerns he faced in his new position in Australia. Fremantle's own career would soon also end in tatters. Five years after MacGillivray's dismissal Fremantle was dead, having spent the last three years of his life involved in various courts martial and having been the subject of stinging criticism from various quarters – party in relation to his imposition of what were seen as unacceptable punishments on men.[97] Fremantle wrote a statement in his own defence at this time which made reference to MacGillivray's dismissal. This statement makes it clear that he felt that the restoration of discipline - discipline he felt that was sadly lacking on the Australian station - was his first priority upon his arrival in 1855. Having had his own problems with discipline on the voyage out to Australia he wrote that it was:

> …rather discouraging to find that in every ship on the station the same perverse disposition existed. My immediate predecessor had been just long enough in command to become aware of this evil, and yet not long enough to take any active steps to suppress it. The former Senior Officer, Sir Everard Home, may be said to have sunk under it.[98]

A letter from Sir James Stirling, then Commander-in-Chief, awaited him on his arrival in Sydney in which he was warned of an ongoing problem with refractory behaviour among junior officers on Australian ships. Stirling hoped that Fremantle would put an end to these problems.[99] MacGillivray's case can therefore be viewed as the first real volley in Fremantle's personal war on insubordination on the Australia station - the war that would eventually lead to Fremantle's own downfall.

MacGillivray's silence regarding his dismissal is curious. He was not generally a man to disguise his feelings on issues and would usually venture opinions on a range of subjects to his many correspondents. He wrote regularly to Hooker and to Gould, less regularly to his family, and yet on this occasion there is nothing. His correspondence ceases. It is difficult to imagine MacGillivray's thoughts during the court of enquiry. The picture that Fremantle paints of him is far from flattering; his belligerence and open defiance, his whispering to one of his fellow officers during the hearings to jog his memory on a specific point, his lies and many deceptions. Perhaps MacGillivray realised that in this particular instance he had overstepped the mark. He had transgressed the bounds of what his friends and supporters back in England would consider reasonable and therefore felt that there was no point in attempting a recovery.

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[96] Fremantle to Beaufort, 1 May 1855, United Kingdom Hydrographic Office, Pre 1857 in-letters, f.358.

[97] David, *The Voyage of HMS Herald*, 271.

[98] Stephen Fremantle, 'Statement 10 April 1858', 28. National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, FRE207.

[99] *Ibid.* Fremantle wrote: 'Candour must admit, that I had not fallen upon a bed of roses; and candour may also allow, that it was not the duty of a public officer to flinch from the trust and responsibility imposed upon him by his Commander-in-Chief, or to succumb to the pretensions of a misjudging faction.'

The impression that is left is that of a clash not merely between men but also between cultures, between classes, between the civilian and the military. The conflict was between someone who saw himself, through his scientific knowledge, aims and pursuits, as above and apart from the naval way of life that surrounded and supported him. MacGillivray's plight is illustrative of the tension that could, and did, arise in relation to the place of science on board British surveying vessels in the nineteenth century. Competing interests, institutional differences, cultural expectations and underlying class issues were all at play in MacGillivray's dismissal.

The voyage of the *Herald* would remain a thorn in MacGillivray's side. The years spent on board the vessel had been difficult. It was clear to those on board that relations between MacGillivray and Denham had been strained from the outset.[100] MacGillivray's entire career following the voyage would be irrevocably altered by it. In reporting the dismissal to Hooker, Milne noted that he believed that MacGillivray would shortly be returning to England and would then be able to give his account of the whole affair in person.[101] However MacGillivray would never give an account of the proceedings that led to his dismissal. He would never return to England. He would never see his wife again. His old ties were effectively severed and as he stepped ashore in Sydney in 1855 he began a new and somewhat perilous chapter in his career. His future now lay in Australia – a country in which he had accumulated vast experience and of which he had a thorough knowledge. In opening this new chapter MacGillivray must have hoped for a future in which, as with so many other new arrivals in Australia, he could escape the difficult baggage - professional, personal and financial - of his past.

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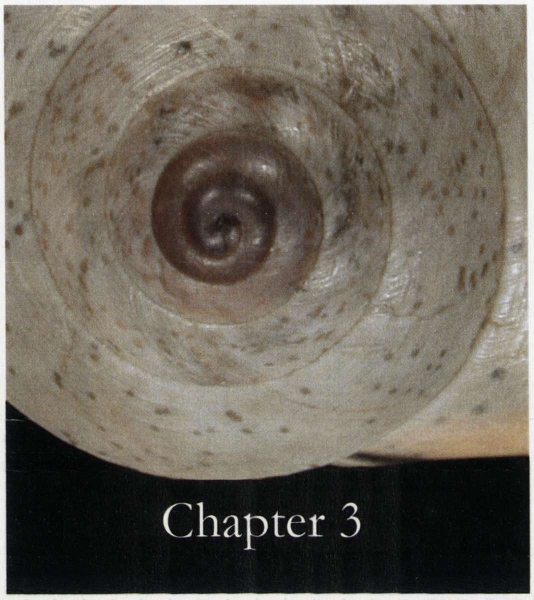
[100] Milne to W Hooker, 17 May 1855, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Directors' correspondence 1855, Vol. XXXV, f318.

[101] *Ibid*



Chapter 3

‘A tide in the affairs of men’
1821 – 1842

There is a tide in the affairs of men.
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
Julius Caesar Act 4, Scene 3

Thirteen years before his dismissal from HMS *Herald* John MacGillivray, then a twenty-one year-old medical student, wrote excitedly to James Harley, a family friend:

> I am happy to say, an event will probably occur in the course of a week or two which will emancipate me from my thraldom "there is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken with the flood, leads on to fortune." – with that said tide has it seems made, or is going to make, a dead set in my favour – and what that is, for I speak in enigmas, I hope to be able to tell you in my next letter. I may mention simply that it is connected with Natural History, and will alter completely my prospects of future life.[1]

MacGillivray's good fortune was to liberate him from his studies of medicine and would enable him to pursue his true calling - natural history. The tide that swept him in this new and exciting direction would hold him captive for the remainder of his life. It would set him on course for a career based on his passions and dreams and was a force he happily surrendered to.

In order to document MacGillivray's career following his dismissal from HMS *Herald* it is first important to go back to his earliest years to give some detail regarding his career leading up to this disastrous incident. The following three chapters trace MacGillivray's development through his formative publications, travels, appointments and voyages.

Making a career out of natural history in the 1840s was not something that many young men could hope for; most aspirants without an independent source of income would be forced to pursue their passion as a hobby. In his landmark study of the development of natural history in Britain, David Elliston Allen noted that 'This almost total absence of a separate world of professional science was one way in which the first half of the Victorian age differed quite sharply from the second.'[2] Allen quotes Edward Forbes who wrote 'People without independence have no business to meddle with science. It should never be linked with lucre.'[3] However, John MacGillivray had several advantages over his fellow medical students with similar ambitions. The most significant advantage was MacGillivray's family background. John was the eldest child of William MacGillivray and Sarah McGaskill. MacGillivray's father, William was a noted ornithologist and, at the time of MacGillivray's letter to Harley, the Regius Professor of Natural History at the University of Aberdeen.

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[1] MacGillivray to Harley, 8 January 1842, Harley Correspondence, Leicester and Rutland Record Office, 13D56/4, f.19. Interestingly Darwin used a paraphrasing of the same quotation in a letter to John Henslow on 5 September 1831 on the prospect of the voyage in the Beagle. See Iain McCalman, *Darwin's Armada : how four voyagers to Australasia won the battle for evolution and changed the world* (Camberwell, Vic.: Penguin Books, 2010), 35.

[2] David Elliston Allen, *The Naturalist in Britain: A social history* (London: A.Lane, 1976), 73.

The Aberdeen Professorship marked the high point of William MacGillivray's career. It was a small acknowledgement of his talents, which entailed hard work but was a fulfilling role and gave the family some much-needed financial stability. MacGillivray senior however was always concerned about the future and still had considerable financial worries. Once appointed to the position he also wrote to James Harley, jubilant about his new appointment but unable relax, saying:

> It appears that I have at length found a temporary refuge from the storm. Yet the anchorage seems insecure, for the blasts of adversity still shake the frail bark, and the sunshine of peace comes but in fugitive glimpses.[4]

William's background was certainly not a privileged one. Born in Aberdeen he was an illegitimate child who was raised by his uncles, farmers in the Outer Hebrides, after his father joined the Cameron Highlanders and went to fight in the Peninsular Wars.[5] He was clearly academically gifted and was sent back to Aberdeen at the age of eleven to attend a school there before entering the University to study medicine. Part way through his medical studies he developed a fascination with natural history and determined that this would be his future career.[6] One of William MacGillivray's best known feats was his walk in 1819 from Edinburgh to London – a journey of over 800 miles – in order to see the birds of the British Museum.[7] This remarkable trek was an indicator of the extreme physical hardiness and resilience evidenced by many early naturalists in Britain as they pursued their passions across the countryside.[8]

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[3] Allen, *The Naturalist in Britain*, 75.

[4] W. MacGillivray to Harley, 19 June 1841, Harley Correspondence, Leicester and Rutland Record Office, 13D56/4, f.15.

[5] Robert Ralph, *William MacGillivray: Creatures of Air, Land and Sea* (London: Merrell Holberton/Natural History Museum, 1999), 15. William MacGillivray, *A Memorial Tribute to William MacGillivray* (Edinburgh: Printed for private circulation, 1901), 6.

[6] Ralph, *William MacGillivray*, 18-19.

[7] Allen, *The Naturalist in Britain*, 68.

[8] *Ibid*, 67.

In 1820 William married his foster-mother's younger sister, Marion. John, their first child, was born on 18 December 1821 in Aberdeen.[9] In 1823 the family moved to Edinburgh when William secured his first natural history appointment, assisting Professor Robert Jameson, then Regius Professor of Natural History at Edinburgh University.[10] William's major responsibility was to look after Jameson's museum. He maintained this position until 1826. During the 1830s, while in Edinburgh, William collaborated with the American ornithologist John James Audobon in the production of Audobon's *Ornithological Biography,* the accompanying work to his *The Birds of America.* This collaboration remains one of the highlights of William MacGillivray's career and would have had a lasting influence on the work of his son. The Audubon and MacGillivray families spent considerable amounts of time together – the sons of the two men going out on their own ornithological expeditions on a number of occasions.[11]

The MacGillivray household was one in which natural history was at the centre of all family activities.[12] It would not have always been an easy household in which to live. As well as constant money worries William MacGillivray was also a controversial figure whose work would be more appreciated after his death more than throughout his lifetime. His numerous books were not financially successful and his ability to offend his colleagues and contemporaries would not assist his son in gaining him entry to the most influential of natural history circles and associations. William MacGillivray made enemies. In his biography of William, Robert Ralph wrote:

> Just why MacGillivray felt so strongly contemptuous of many of his contemporaries, or why he felt the need to express it so publicly, is not clear. Perhaps there was a lurking sense of inferiority stemming from his background,

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[9] Ralph lists MacGillivray's birth year as 1822 in *William MacGillivray* and 1821 in Robert Ralph, 'John MacGillivray - His Life and Work', *Archives of Natural History*, 20 (1993), 185-95.
Others all list it as 1821 including J.H Calaby, 'MacGillivray, John (1821-1867)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 2 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1967), 167-168.

[10] Ralph, *William MacGillivray*, 50.

[11] MacGillivray, *A Memorial Tribute to William MacGillivray*, 40. The author goes on to state that: 'Mr Alexander Fraser, Wimmera, Bruntsfield Place, Edinburgh, lately of Canonmills Lodge, son of MacGillivray's friend who was then a boy, still remembers with pleasure the friendly meetings in one or other of the three family residences, and he specially mentions one such meeting in Audubon's rooms when John MacGillivray (MacGillivray's eldest son), carelessly flourishing a stick, broke a glass case in which Audubon kept one of his ornithological treasures, to the great disappointment and annoyance of the naturalist. Mr Fraser also relates how he, John MacGillivray, and John Audubon, then both lads like himself (afterwards eminent naturalists) were wont to go out on bird-shooting expeditions, when on one occasion they were caught in Ravelston Woods, rather roughly handled, and had their gun taken from them.'

[12] In MacGillivray, *A Memorial Tribute to William MacGillivray*, 42 – the author states that 'In the work of collecting he was aided by members of his own family, by students, and by friends resident in various parts of the adjoining districts, all of whom, inspired by him, were more than willing to contribute to his work any aid in their power. Again on page 60, 'There can be no finer proof of the beauty of his life than that every member of his large family laboured with him and for him, both sons and daughters, attracted to the work by love and sympathy.'

> perhaps it was a strong streak of Scottish independence in his nature, but more likely, he simply knew and in an almost obsessive way needed everyone else to know, that the natural world could only properly be studied and understood by observing it in the field. Whatever the reason, he was making plenty of enemies for himself...[13]

Ralph could well have added, enemies also for his son.

Very little information regarding John MacGillivray's childhood exists. In his obituary of John his brother-in-law Patrick Beaton remarked that:

> Many anecdotes of his boyhood are retained among the surviving members of his family; all tend to show that he was a wild, impulsive, warm-hearted lad, ready to lead others into mischief, ready, also, to bear more than his own share of the punishment.[14]

The MacGillivray family was large – of the thirteen children born to William and Marion four died in infancy or childhood.[15] Despite William MacGillivray's scientific appointments the family always struggled financially. There were also continual health problems. In January 1841 just prior to his appointment to the Professorship in Aberdeen, William wrote to his friend Harley:

> Five weeks ago one of the children took scarlet fever, then another, a third, a fourth a fifth, then their mother, then the youngest child get unwell with her teeth, I believe, and we had seven in bed all at once. One had a relapse, and one is still very ill but the rest are recovering. Yesterday, my eldest, John, a medical student took the fever, and now the eruption is out on him. I have a sore throat myself, but it may be a cold. So, we have a complete hospital, but you will give me credit for being grateful for such mercy as we have experienced.[16]

In terms of natural history it is clear William MacGillivray had a strong influence on the development of his eldest son. By his own account John's interest in the study of ornithology began as soon as he was old enough to be entrusted with a gun before he was ten.[17] By the age of sixteen he was delivering a series of lectures on natural history in different parochial schools in Fife.[18]

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[13] Ralph, *William MacGillivray*, 90.

[14] Patrick Beaton, 'A Martyr to Science', *Good Words*, July (1868): 425.

[15] Ralph, *William MacGillivray*, 122. Other more detailed information on other siblings provided by Kay Barnett (a descendant of John MacGillivray) and from notes in John MacGillivray, *Natural History Notebook 1855-66*, Mitchell Library, ML/B944 as follows: Isabella (1823-65), Williamina Craigie (1824/25-1886), Marion MacCaskill 1826-1880), William Craigie (1828-1836), Anne (1830-1831), Anne Dorothea (1832-?), Paul Howard (1834-1895), Audubon Felix 1836-?), Caroline Mary (1838-1865), Margaret Christina (1840-1904), William Norman (1842-1859), Unnamed Male.

[16] W. MacGillivray to Harley, 29 January 1841, Harley Correspondence, Leicester and Rutland Record Office, 13D56/4, f.11.

John MacGillivray's love of fieldwork is perhaps the area in which his father can be seen to have had the greatest influence upon his natural history career. William MacGillivray had strong views on those he derided as 'cabinet collectors', who paid others to collect on their behalf without observing the species in the field.[19] His son shared these views. John's clear love of being in the field would have come as a direct result of his father's encouragement in this aspect of his work.

Another striking feature of William's career that would show itself in John was the breadth of his knowledge and abilities. Although ornithology was William's primary area of expertise he wrote and lectured on every branch of natural history. In a speech made in his honour on the occasion of the dedication of a memorial to him, Dr John Forbes White said of William that he was, 'perhaps the last of the race of all-round naturalists, though he had the accuracy of the specialist in many departments.'[20]

The influence of William MacGillivray upon his son can therefore be traced right through John's life and career on a number of fronts. On the positive side were John's love of fieldwork, breadth of knowledge, the intense physical pleasure he took in his work and the physical hardiness that distinguished him from many of his colleagues. Less positive traits would appear to include an apparent inability to manage money and a chip on the shoulder that would make relations with colleagues and patrons difficult and at times unmanageable.[21]

In the early 1840s John MacGillivray began to emerge as an independent scientific figure – writing, travelling and publishing on areas of interest in natural history. Information regarding this period of John MacGillivray's life comes primarily from his earliest scientific papers and from his, and William's, correspondence with James Harley. Harley was a wool merchant, a keen naturalist and a regular correspondent of William MacGillivray between

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[17] MacGillivray to Harley, 18 December 1841, Harley Correspondence, Leicester and Rutland Record Office, 13D56/4, f.18. Beaton, 'A Martyr to Science', 425.

[18] Beaton, 'A Martyr to Science', 425.

[19] Ralph, *William MacGillivray*, 34.

[20] MacGillivray, *A Memorial Tribute to William MacGillivray*, 58.

[21] John also inherited his father's rather small stature. John measured 5 foot 7 inches. In MacGillivray, *A Memorial Tribute to William MacGillivray*, 44 it is noted that William was 'rather below medium stature'.

1839 and 1847.[22] In 1841, when he was nineteen years old, John commenced his own correspondence with Harley. Nine of his letters to Harley from between 1841 to 1851 survive.[23]

John's first letter to Harley in 1841 introduced himself and outlined his interests in natural history. Along with ornithology he listed geology and entomology and 'countless other "ologies"' as his key interests.[24] John's letters to Harley demonstrate that he was a confident and somewhat cocky young man.[25]

As with so many aspiring naturalists John had began studying medicine – in his case at Edinburgh University. His earliest publications however attest to his abiding interests in natural history. His first published paper appeared in the *Edinburgh Academic Annual* for 1840 titled 'The mental qualities of birds, As compared with their cerebral development'.[26] This paper aimed, according to MacGillivray, to 'investigate the relation supposed by phrenologists to exist between the cerebral configuration of animals, and their various instincts or mental powers'.[27] MacGillivray had been mulling over the issue of phrenology for some years. In 1838 he had commenced a collection of bird skulls for analysis and at the time of publication had 239 specimens on which he based his observations. The paper is damning of all efforts by phrenologists to apply their reasoning to the ornithological world. MacGillivray stated that he had avoided dealing with issues relating to human phrenology as other, abler, hands had already pointed out the 'inconsistency and consequent absurdity' of this area of thought. A response to MacGillivray's paper was published in the *Phrenological Journal and Magazine of Moral Science* the same year.[28] This review of MacGillivray's paper dismissed his efforts and arguments as the work of an ill-informed juvenile – however it did state that 'he evinces a better insight into the methods necessary to be adopted in testing phrenological views; and though he has utterly failed in this attempt, the failure may be attributable more to youthful inexperience than to any mental incapacity for handling his subject'.[29] After this review it was hardly surprising that MacGillivray maintained his dislike for phrenology. Two years after the publication of his paper he remarked to Harley that '...I am so prejudiced against this easy solve of all moral and metaphysical problems that I cannot bear to hear it even mentioned'.[30]

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[22] For information on Harley see Ron Hickling, *James Harley: A Leicestershire Naturalist 1801-1860*, (Leicestershire: Leicestershire Museums, Arts & Records Service, 1996).

[23] This correspondence is held at the Leicester and Rutland Record Office. The correspondence has not been cataloged.

[24] MacGillivray to Harley, 18 December 1841, Harley Correspondence, Leicester and Rutland Record Office, 13D56/4, f.18.

[25] An example of this cockiness can be seen in MacGillivray's comments regarding Charles Waterton. Harley had confessed some wariness regarding publishing something that might irritate the prominent naturalist Charles Waterton. Charles Waterton was a well-known and eccentric gentleman naturalist. He had travelled throughout South America and had written up his adventures as 'Wanderings in South America' a publication that had proved popular and successful. Waterton was a close friend of George Ord – the bitterest enemy of John James Audubon. John offered to leap into battle in Harley's defense should it become necessary. He wrote: 'Should anything of yours be printed at which "The wanderer" is pleased to take umbrage – why, let him. As you hint at sending for your Northern allies if [?] pressed. I for one, will buckle on my armour and take the field. Though I should not have much chance with a gaunt, grim, weather beaten colossus such as they say he is…'

[26] John MacGillivray, 'On the Mental qualities of birds, As compared to their cerebral development', *Edinburgh Academic Annual* (1840): 69-86. The Academic Annual lists MacGillivray as the Vice-President of the Cuvierian Society further demonstrating his activities as a budding naturalist.

[27] MacGillivray, 'On the Mental qualities of birds', 71.

[28] 'MacGillivray on the brains of birds', *The Phrenological Journal and Magazine of Moral Science*, (London: Simpkin, Marshall and Co., 1840), 274 – 280.

In 1840 MacGillivray spent four months with relatives in Harris in the Outer Hebrides gathering material for his next publications. He based himself on the island of Berneray, in the Sound of Harris. After his visit to the Outer Hebrides MacGillivray crossed to Skye and walked from here back to Edinburgh to recommence his medical studies. MacGillivray then set about writing up his observations for the *Annals and Magazine of Natural History* published in 1841 as 'Notes on the Zoology of the Outer Hebrides'.[31]

MacGillivray also published two short articles in the *Annals and Magazine of Natural History* based on observations he had made while in Aberdeen.[32] His move at this stage to Aberdeen would have been due to his father's appointment to the University. Although these articles were an early indication of his interests and talents it was the publication in 1842 of his article relating to the island of St Kilda that is his most significant from this period.

MacGillivray's article detailed an eight-day trip to the Island of St Kilda made during his stay in the Outer Hebrides during the summer of 1840. The article was titled 'Account of the Island of St Kilda, chiefly with reference to its Natural History; from notes made during a visit in July 1840' and was published in the *Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal.*[33]

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[29] 'MacGillivray on the brains of birds', 274. The response stated that 'some years ago it was a current opinion amongst the students of Edinburgh, that attacks on phrenology afforded the readiest steps for mounting into favour with the professors of the University, and for attaining to a sort of juvenile notoriety that was naturally enough mistaken for public celebrity by those whose world was pretty well limited to their teachers and fellow students. The appearance of Mr. MacGillivray's essay, in the pages of the Academic Annual, leads to the inference that the opinion referred to still lingers with some of the student successors of those who first acted upon it, and has now prompted the young essayist, in a spirit of imitative ambition, to travel along the same track worn by his predecessors.'

[30] MacGillivray to Harley, 15 February 1842, Harley Correspondence, Leicester and Rutland Record Office, 13D56/5, f.12.

[31] John MacGillivray, 'Notes on the Zoology of the Outer Hebrides'. *Annals and Magazine of Natural History*, Ser. i., Vol. viii., September (1841): 7-16.

[32] John MacGillivray, 'On some Mammalia, Birds, and Fishes lately observed in the neighbourhood of Aberdeen'. *Ann. Mag. Nat. Hist.*, Ser. i., Vol. viii., November (1841): 230-231, & John MacGillivray, 'Catalogue of the marine Zoophytes of the neighbourhood of Aberdeen'. *Ann. Mag. Nat. Hist.*, Ser. i., Vol. ix., August (1842): 462-469.

It is this article which first gives a clear indication of the talent MacGillivray had, not just for fieldwork but also for ethnography and writing. A trip to St Kilda in a small boat in 1840 was an undertaking not without risk. MacGillivray's article makes the most of the adventure of the operation as well as the natural history observational outcomes. Of his journey home after four days on the island he wrote:

> The small leaky boat in which I was, in company with two St Kildians, proving rather troublesome, was abandoned by our friends in the other, who would tow us no longer. We were thus left to our fate, in a dark night, with a storm blowing off the land, to reach which we had a miserable boat half filled with water, and two oars, one of them broken.[34]

MacGillivray was forced to row throughout the night at the end of which he found himself on the uninhabited island of Shellay. He and his companions breakfasted on brackish water and raw limpets before making for Pabbay, which they eventually made in safety. His stated primary purpose for the visit was to observe the water birds of the island. His observations throughout the article also touch on the island's entomology and botany. MacGillivray also spent a considerable amount of time detailing the lives of the inhabitants of the island. He samples their foods, comments on their way of life, discusses their population and mortality trends, domestic manners, language, appearance and main industries. His talents as far as ethnological observation are well demonstrated, as is his humour. Of the collection, production and uses for fulmar petrel oil, an oil disgorged by the bird in question (*Procellaria glacialis*) and one of the main industries of the island, he wrote:

> The oil thus procured and preserved, besides supplying their lamps is used by the inhabitants as a medicine, being sometimes of considerable efficacy in chronic rheumatism, and acting as a cathartic; while, from its nauseous taste and smell, it would doubtless prove an effectual emetic also to any but a St Kildian.[35]

MacGillivray's interest in the inhabitants of the island and their interaction with their environment is one of the outstanding features of this article. His enjoyment of life in the field is obvious as is his ability to write for a broad audience.

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[33] John MacGillivray, 'Account of the island of St. Kilda, chiefly with reference to its natural history, from notes made during a visit in July, 1840'. *Edinb. New Phil. Journ.*, Vol. xxxii. (1842): 47-70.

[34] *Ibid*, 70.

[35] *Ibid*, 62.

Throughout this period MacGillivray was also an active member of the Cuvierian Natural History Society of Edinburgh. Two of his articles list him as the Vice President of this particular organization.[36] The society had been formed in 1833 by a group of young men interested in various branches of natural history.[37] Meetings took place each fortnight and members contributed papers on a range of natural history subjects. As well as a President the society had two vice-presidents and a secretary.[38] MacGillivray's involvement in the society would have given him access to a range of contacts in the natural history scene in Edinburgh.

Between MacGillivray's family background, university connections, early publications and networking he had, it seemed, positioned himself on a successful trajectory into the world of natural history. He seemed full of promise. All of these factors seemed to come together with his first major appointment in 1842 of which he wrote to Harley. The emancipating event to which MacGillivray referred to in the letter was the securing of a position with Edward Stanley, the 13th Earl of Derby.

Derby was a private collector of natural history material of unrivalled proportions. The Earl was a powerful, wealthy and influential figure in natural history circles. He was president of the Linnaean Society from 1828 until 1834 and was also a founding member of the London Zoological Society in 1826 of which he was president from 1831 until 1851.[39] Derby collected both living and preserved specimens from around the world. The menagerie established at his estate, Knowsley Hall, near Liverpool, was remarkable. At his death in 1851 there were 1272 birds and 345 mammals in the collection. As well as birds and mammals the menagerie included fish and reptiles.[40] The Earl maintained close links and friendships with key figures in the natural history scene including, most particularly, the ornithologist John Gould and the British Museum's John Gray. Derby's collecting network was extensive. As well as maintaining several collectors out in the field he had contact with no fewer than 30 agents from whom he purchased material.[41]

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[36] 'Bird Phrenology' and 'Notes on Zoology of Outer Hebrides'. In his St Kilda paper he is listed as a member of the organisation.

[37] 'Some Instances of the State of Natural History in Britain', *The Magazine of Natural History and Journal of Zoology, Botany, Mineralogy, Geology and Meteorology*, 8, 51 (1835), 409.

[38] *Ibid*

[39] Clemency Fisher and Christine E Jackson, 'The 13th Earl of Derby as a Scientist' in Clemency Fisher (ed), *A Passion for Natural History: The life and Legacy of the 13th Earl of Derby*, (Liverpool: National Museums & Galleries on Merseyside, 2002), 50.

[40] S.J. Woolfall, 'History of the 13th Earl of Derby's menagerie and aviary at Knowsley Hall, Liverpool (1806-1851)', *Archives of Natural History*, 17, 1 (1990): 4.

[41] S.J. Woolfall, 'History of the 13th Earl of Derby's menagerie and aviary at Knowsley Hall', 10.

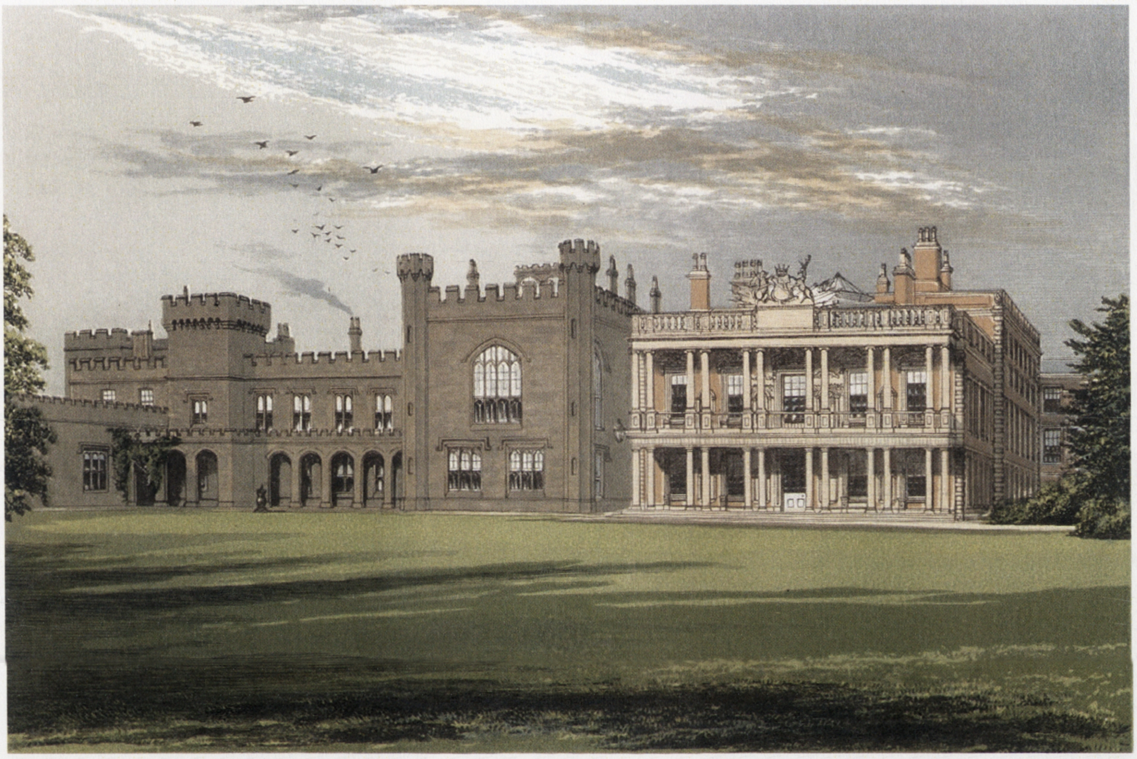

Plate 6: The south front of Knowsley Hall in Merseyside, England
(From Morris's *Country Seats* 1880)

The exact details of MacGillivray's appointment are not known. In a note to Harley following that in which he first referred to the position, MacGillivray stated that, 'I am to have charge of his zoological establishment. The finest private one in Britain and perhaps the world.'[42] It seems unlikely that MacGillivray would have been put in charge of the establishment at Knowsley and there is certainly no record of this being the case. The Earl did have taxidermists on staff at the Hall from the late 1830s but the first true 'curator' of the collection, Louise Fraser, was not appointed until around 1845.[43] William MacGillivray claimed credit for securing John's appointment at Knowsley also in a letter to Harley.[44] Despite his obvious pleasure at his son's success in obtaining the position it is also clear that he would miss having John at home and that he also held some concerns regarding John's behaviour once liberated from parental supervision. In a letter to Harley he wrote anxiously 'I hope he will conduct himself with strict propriety'.[45]

MacGillivray also told Harley that after some time residing at the Earl's estate at Knowsley he would be sent out as a travelling naturalist at the Earl's expense.[46] This was certainly the case. MacGillivray was about to be sent out on his first major expedition - the expedition that would set the course of his travels for the remainder of his career.

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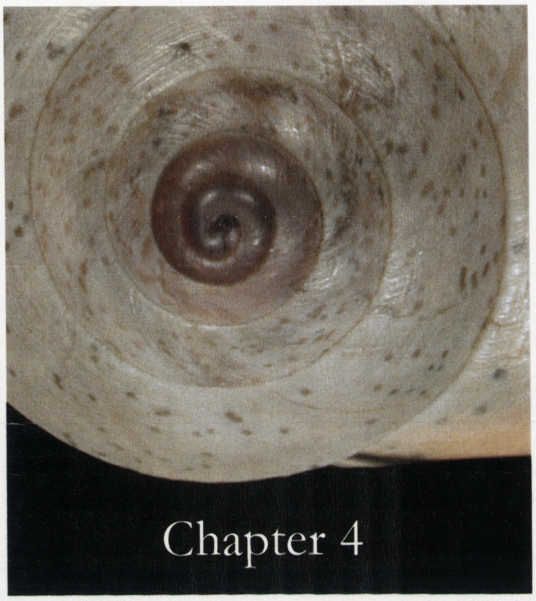
[42] MacGillivray to Harley, 11 January 1842, Harley Correspondence, Leicester and Rutland Record Office, 13D56/4, f.19.

[43] Clemency Fisher and Christine E Jackson, 'The 13th Earl of Derby as a Scientist' Clemency Fisher (ed), *A Passion for Natural History: The life and Legacy of the 13th Earl of Derby*, 49.

[44] W. MacGillivray to Harley, 30 May 1842, Harley Correspondence, Leicester and Rutland Record Office,13D56/5, f.4.

[45] W. MacGillivray to Harley, 7 March 1842, Harley Correspondence, Leicester and Rutland Record Office,13D56/5, f.3.

[46] MacGillivray to Harley, 11 January 1842, Harley Correspondence, Leicester and Rutland Record Office, 13D56/4, f.19.



Chapter 4

HMS Fly
April 1842 – June 1846

On such a full sea are we now afloat,
And we must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures.
Julius Caesar Act 4, Scene 3

It is difficult to imagine how a nineteen-year old young man, Scottish born and bred, would have viewed a voyage to the northern coasts and reefs of Australia in 1842. Europeans had barely penetrated the northern parts of the Australian continent. The expeditions of Augustus Charles Gregory, John McDouall Stuart and Ludwig Leichhardt were still some years away. Attempts at settlement had been resounding failures – Fort Dundas on Melville Island had been deserted in 1829, the same year that Fort Wellington in Raffles Bay was also abandoned. The settlement at Victoria in Port Essington, established in 1838 was still clinging to a tenuous existence but was isolated and struggling. If these areas of the continent were remote and unknown the coast of near-by New Guinea was even more mysterious. The name of New Guinea conjured up images of a wild and untamed land full of promise, beauty and danger – an image retained well into the twentieth century. Yet perhaps in setting out on this adventure MacGillivray can be seen as one of the many Scots from this period, Scots that Linda Colley terms as Celtic adventurers, who set out to make their name by travelling to the most distant parts of the British Empire.[1]

In March 1842 at the Devonport docks at Plymouth Captain Francis Price Blackwood was busy preparing his new command, H.M.S *Fly*. The *Fly*'s main destination would be the Great Barrier Reef on the north east coast of Australia. Blackwood's orders set out a complex and demanding task. The emphasis of the work was to survey the gaps in the reef through which vessels sailing the outer route would be able to enter safely into the calmer waters of the inner reef. The object of the voyage required a survey of 'the exterior or eastern edge of that vast chain of reefs which extends almost continuously from Breaksea Spit to the shore of New Guinea.'[2] Once Blackwood had made a survey of all possible channels though the barrier chain, he was to determine the ideal route for merchant vessels and was to 'devise some practical means of marking them by beacons of wood, or stone, or iron, so placed on their outer islands or cays, that they may serve to guide those vessels to a certain and safe landfall'.[3] A safe route through the Torres Strait was also to be identified, building on the work of 'Flinders, Bligh, King and other navigators'. The *Fly*'s orders also included exploring and charting the Bellona, Bampton and Mellish reefs westward of New Caledonia in order to map the western limits of the wide sea channel in the approach to the Barrier reef openings.

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[1] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (London: Vintage, 1992), 135.
[2] Joseph Beete Jukes, *Narrative of the surveying voyage of H.M.S. Fly, commanded by Captain F.P. Blackwood, in Torres Strait, New Guinea, and other islands of the Eastern Archipelago, during the years 1842-1846 : together with an excursion into the interior of the eastern part of Java, 2 Volumes* (London: T. & W. Boone, 1847), 256.
[3] Jukes, *Narrative*, Vol. 2, 256-257.

For five months, Blackwood had been busy ordering equipment, selecting his officers and crew and fitting out his vessel. In the midst of his last minute preparations he was interrupted by a young, red headed Scot, Mr John MacGillivray, who presented him with a letter of introduction and orders to take him on board. Blackwood was surprised. He had heard nothing of this particular appointment. He wrote immediately to Sir Francis Beaufort, head of the Admiralty Hydrographic Office, to clarify the matter. His letter displays a little pique at the way in which MacGillivray's orders had been presented.

> I have received an order to take a Mr McGilllivray [sic] on board and "land him where he may wish". May I ask if I am merely to give him a passage or if he is to be attached to the Naturalist's Staff for the voyage – which he appears to consider will be the case?[4]

That scientific investigation and interests would be represented on board HMS *Fly* was, by this stage, understood. The exact nature and extent of this representation was, however, still a matter of debate. The first choice for the position of naturalist had declined the appointment. Blackwood's correspondence indicates that the position was initially offered to John Scoular. Following the disappointment of Scoular's refusal, Blackwood wrote to Beaufort on 12 December 1841 stating that, as his surgeon and assistant surgeon had scientific interests (especially in botany), perhaps the voyage could do without an official naturalist unless a 'really scientific man' could be found.[5] Three days later Blackwood wrote again stating wryly that as the "Great Naturalist" had declined the voyage, he was now enclosing a note offering the position to a gentleman recommended by Captain Prescott, late Governor of Newfoundland.[6] The gentleman recommended by Prescott was the geologist Joseph Beete Jukes. Jukes accepted the position gratefully and set about his preparations for the voyage.

Jukes and Blackwood appear to have had an excellent working relationship from the outset of the voyage. At 31 and 33 respectively, the two men were at similar points in their careers and found each other easy and reliable companions. Jukes had recently returned from

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[4] Blackwood to Beaufort, 17 March 1842, Great Britain. Hydrographic Dept., Records M2318-2337, 1779-1918. Australian Joint Copying Project, National Library of Australia and State Library of New South Wales. Canberra: Australian Joint Copying Project, microform 2330, Surveyors' letters, 1828-1909.

[5] Blackwood to Beaufort, 12 December 1841, Great Britain. Hydrographic Dept., microform 2330, Surveyors' letters, 1828-1909.

[6] Blackwood to Beaufort, 15 December 1841, Great Britain. Hydrographic Dept., microform 2330, Surveyors' letters, 1828-1909.

Newfoundland where he had held his first significant appointment as a geological surveyor from April 1839 until the end of 1840.[7] As well as Captain Prescott, Jukes had other powerful supporters in England, most especially his friend and teacher the Reverend Adam Sedgwick. His adventures in Newfoundland were perhaps a good preparation for the life he would lead on board the *Fly*. Jukes wrote to his mother, 'what I have wanted all along was a little roughing and knocking about the world. It sharpens a man's wits and resolution wonderfully'.[8]

Blackwood had already had his share of roughing and knocking about the world having entered the navy at the age of 12. He had visited Australia once before on board the *Hyacinth* in 1833 but the voyage of the *Fly* would be the most significant command of his career.[9] One month from departure he did not necessarily appreciate MacGillivray's appearance in March 1842. He was, naturally, cautious about taking on board an unknown civilian. The *Fly*'s orders set out a certainly arduous and possibly dangerous, task and Blackwood clearly felt that he was already well provided with officers with an interest in the natural sciences. He added in his letter to Beaufort:

> If he is a clever fellow his services will be of course valuable and I would gladly put up with the inconvenience for the sake of his talents – but if not – we should have three Naturalist Men – one of whom we might certainly be well rid of. It appears also he is Collecting for Lord Derby – so that I would ask permission to let him stay with us depend on Mr Jukes report of his knowledge and usefulness.[10]

Jukes must have reported favourably regarding MacGillivray's knowledge and talents as no further protest appeared from Blackwood regarding his presence on board the vessel. The preparations for their departure continued. Later that month, perhaps prompted by MacGillivray's arrival and at the command of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, Blackwood had all of his officers and gentlemen sign a declaration regarding the disposal of specimens collected during the voyage. The declaration stated that all officers and gentlemen on board both HMS *Fly* and her tender, the cutter *Bramble*, under the command of Lieutenant Charles Yule, would be bound by an agreement that one specimen of whatever was collected would be considered as public property and would be at the disposal of their Lordships.[11]

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[7] Robert A. Bayliss, 'The Travels of Joseph Beete Jukes, F.R.S.', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, 32, 2 (1978): 202.

[8] Bayliss, 'The Travels of Joseph Beete Jukes', 203.

[9] *Quarterdeck Cambridge: the quest of Francis Price Blackwood Captain* RN, (Royston, Ellisons' Editions, c1991), 13-14.

[10] Blackwood to Beaufort, 17 March 1842, Great Britain. Hydrographic Dept., microform 2330, Surveyors' letters, 1828-1909.

For MacGillivray, acquitting himself well during the voyage would be vital to his future prospects. It was not always going to be an easy task. The *Fly* left England on 11 April 1842 and did not sail back into Spithead until 19 June 1846 – an absence from England of four years and eleven weeks. The voyage would drive Blackwood close to despair and threatened to ruin the young MacGillivray's promising career. However as the *Fly* left England in 1842, the signs were good and all aboard were looking forward to a voyage of discovery and adventure.

The voyage of the *Fly* was a significant one in the history of surveying and exploration in the Pacific. It laid down the path for subsequent, better-known, voyages such of those of the *Rattlesnake* and *Herald* and completed an impressive portion of the orders set out by the Admiralty. Jukes showed himself to be a naturalist, observer and chronicler worthy of emulation and Blackwood a Captain who, for the most part, commanded respect and admiration. Despite its significance, the voyage has received only limited historical attention. Two contemporary accounts do exist – the official narrative written by Jukes and published in 1847 and the more colourful account written by the ship's artist Harden S Melville, published in 1867.[12] A complete account of the voyage or an analysis of its significance to Australian and Pacific exploration and discovery has yet to be written. This chapter will not attempt to fill this gap in the historical record. Rather, it aims to examine the significance of the voyage principally in relation to its impact and influence on the career the young naturalist on board, John MacGillivray.

Piecing together MacGillivray's experience on board the *Fly* is a far more difficult task than for his later voyages. Regrettably his journal of the voyage has not survived. He is barely mentioned in Juke's official narrative or Melville's more colourful one and his letters are, to say the least, sparse. Three letters from MacGillivray to Gray at the British Museum are the best source of information regarding his activities along with three articles in the *Zoologist* written by MacGillivray and published in 1846.[13]

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[11] Blackwood, Memo, 27 March 1842, Great Britain. Hydrographic Dept., microform 2330, Surveyors' letters, 1828-1909. A copy of this was sent to Beaufort on 24 April 1842.

[12] Jukes, *Narrative of the surveying voyage of H.M.S. Fly.* Harden S. Melville, *The adventures of a griffin on a voyage of discovery: Written by himself* (London: Bell and Daldy, 1867).

[13] John MacGillivray, 'An account of Raine's Islet, on the N.E. coast of New Holland', *Zoologist,* Vol. iv, (1846): 1473-1481. John MacGillivray 'Ornithological Excursion to the North Coast of New Holland',

The challenge for this period in MacGillivray's life is to weave these known fragments together with the other accounts of the voyage. His known experiences and activities must be combined with those events, people and places encountered during the voyage in which it can be presumed MacGillivray either participated, interacted, visited or was influenced by. When this picture of the voyage is assembled, its significant impact on the character, ideas, career and outlook of the young naturalist is evident.

For John MacGillivray the voyage signalled his emergence into the world of professional science. It exposed him to the region that would become the focus of his life's work. It connected him with the network of scientists busily examining, analysing and classifying the products of these highly significant voyages. It also introduced him to a range of other naturalists and collectors already working in Australia and the Pacific. Had MacGillivray remained working on the collections of the Earl of Derby at Knowsley Hall, his career would have taken a very different path. As it was, the opportunity presented by the voyage of the *Fly* catapulted him into the heart of the burgeoning industry of natural history collecting associated with Admiralty surveying voyages of the nineteenth century.

The voyage out to Australia was a smooth one that provided a number of opportunities for MacGillivray to practice his collecting skills and become better acquainted with those men he would be living so intimately with for the next four years. When the ship crossed the equator on 18 May it would have been MacGillivray's first crossing. As such, he would have had to take his part in the festivities traditionally associated with the event, which, by all accounts were, on this occasion, boisterous, entertaining and thorough.[14] The rest of the journey went smoothly. The *Fly* arrived at Van Diemen's Land entering Storm Bay on 27 August 1842.

This would be MacGillivray's first glimpse of the country in which he would spend most of the remainder of his life. His thoughts and impressions are not recorded. While in Hobart he took lodgings with Jukes who commented that the two were '... glad to be near a fire and get some of our things dried, many of which were moldy and spoiling'.[15]

Zoologist, Vol. iv, (1846): 1481-1484. John MacGillivray, 'Notes on Australian Natural History', *Zoologist*, Vol. iv (1846): 1485-1491.

[14] Jukes, *Letters and extracts*, 145-8. Melville, *Adventures of a griffin*, 20-34.

[15] Jukes, *Letters and extracts*, 156.

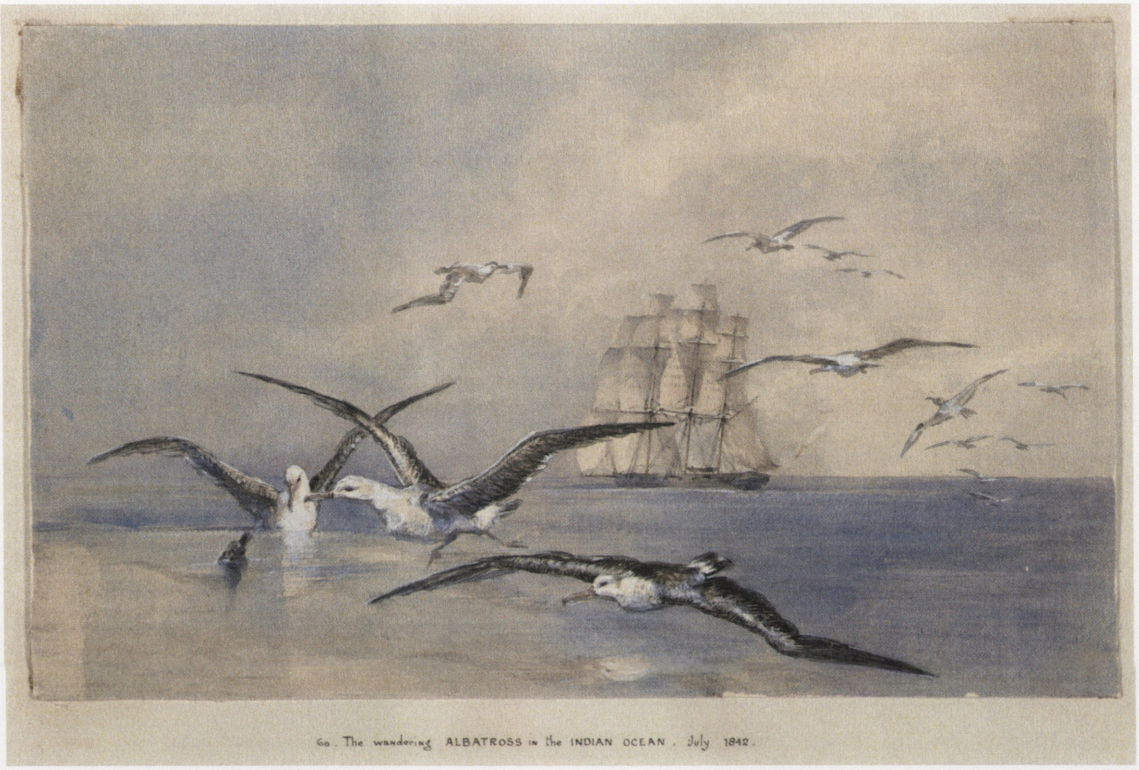
60. The wandering ALBATROSS in the INDIAN OCEAN. July 1842.

Plate 7: 'The wandering albatross in the Indian Ocean.'
(Edwin Augustus Porcher. National Library of Australia)

While MacGillivray's initial impressions of Australia are unknown what he did record were accounts of two of his earliest collecting adventures. The first outing took place in Hobart hunting possums, and the second inland from Port Stephens searching for small wallabies called pademelon. MacGillivray wrote both of these expeditions up in one of his articles for the *Zoologist* under the title 'Notes on Australian Natural History'.[16] Perhaps more than any of his other writings, this particular article reveals his relish of the sportsmanlike aspect of his collecting activities and captures his youthful enthusiasm for the adventure he had set out on. The accounts of his collecting expeditions in this new environment are written with excitement and humour and were an early indication of his considerable talents as a writer. They are an excellent example of the style of Victorian natural history writing which Allen, in *The Naturalist in Britain,* applauds for its 'charming candour' and 'unselfconscious enthusiasm. This, Allen argues is a style of natural history writing which is far more accessible, far longer lasting and certainly far more entertaining than its modern counterpart.[17]

MacGillivray's writings capture the Victorian enthusiasm for hunting and hunting literature. In his analysis of hunting and imperialism, historian John McKenzie notes that the term of 'sport', one MacGillivray uses throughout his career to describe many of his collecting forays, is synonymous at this stage with hunting.[18] In writing in this manner MacGillivray is reflecting the powerful links between the Victorian elite hunting culture, the increasing popularity of natural history collecting and the, often, blurred line between the two.[19] The game books kept by the more dedicated hunters in which they recorded details of what had been killed, size, weight, physical descriptions and environmental conditions exemplify the blurred lines between the hunter and the natural history collector. The best examples of these could well cross the line and be considered as valuable sources of natural history documentation.[20]

In his analysis of the relationship between hunting and natural history collecting McKenzie makes the interesting point that natural history museums often depended on hunters as much as collectors for their specimens. This curious, intertwined relationship meant that the hunting elite had considerable presence on museum boards and were thus able to influence the direction that these key institutions took.[21] McKenzie also identifies hunting as a major force in imperial expansion as hunters sought new and more exotic game and wilder and more challenging landscapes.[22] All of these elements of this interesting relationship are represented within MacGillivray's career and attitudes. MacGillivray's hunting exploits feed into a colonial frontier-adventuring ideal that had a strong appeal for the audience back in Britain.[23] McKenzie notes that:

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[16] John MacGillivray, 'Notes on Australian Natural History'.

[17] David Elliston Allen, *The Naturalist in Britain: A social history* (London: A.Lane, 1976), 73.

[18] John M. McKenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 38.

[19] His early association with John Audubon may also have influenced MacGillivray's style. Audubon, perhaps more than any other naturalist, delighted in presenting, describing and depicting himself as a great hunter. See Tim Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000), 211. MacGillivray's articles, while not going to this extreme, certainly feed into the popularity of this particular genre of writing.

[20] McKenzie, *The Empire of Nature*, 34.

> Hunting required all the most virile attributes of the imperial male – courage, endurance, individualism (adaptable to national ends), sportsmanship (combining the moral etiquette of the sportsman with horsemanship and marksmanship), resourcefulness, a mastery of environmental signs, and a knowledge of natural history. It was indeed that scientific dimension, the acquisition of zoological, botanical, meteorological and ballistical knowledge, and the associated ordering and classifying of natural phenomena which helped to give hunting its supreme acceptability among late Victorians.[24]

MacGillivray's article regarding his first outing in Tasmania stated that a party of four from the *Fly* set out on a heavenly night 'not made for slumber'. The full moon shone above them, their four dogs ranged about them and their spirits were high. They travelled to Rosny, the property of Algernon Sidney Montagu, one of Hobart's Supreme Court Justices, across on the eastern side of the Derwent River. They were met by the overseer of the property and a party of convicts who were to accompany them for the evening. The hunt was counted by MacGillivray to have been a success. Altogether nine specimens were killed – mostly Brush-tailed and some Ring-tailed species. At around eleven in the evening, the party built up a large fire and sat together drinking tea, eating damper and indulging in some of the "queens own" while being entertained by their companions with stories of bushrangers 'in some of which', MacGillivray wryly noted, 'I suspect they had themselves played a part'.[25]

No other accounts of MacGillivray's experiences in Hobart are extant. It is likely that he, along with many of the officers, socialised at Government house with the Governor and his wife John and Lady Jane Franklin, keen supporters of science and natural history. The *Fly* briefly visited Port Arthur before proceeding to Sydney, where they anchored on 15 October.

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[21] *Ibid*, 38.
[22] *Ibid*, 37.
[23] *Ibid*, 43.
[24] *Ibid*, 51.
[25] John MacGillivray, 'Notes on Australian Natural History', 1486. Melville also gives an account of a night of opossum hunting however it varies in some significant details and so may have been a separate excursion. Melville, *Adventures of a griffin*, 52-55.

After spending just over a month in Sydney the *Fly* sailed to Port Stephens, arriving on 26 November 1842, where it remained for over three weeks. During this time MacGillivray took the opportunity to travel inland in search of the specimens which became the subject of the second half of his highly entertaining article for the *Zoologist.*

MacGillivray's account of this expedition continues to demonstrate his particular writing style. Two significant aspects of MacGillivray's skills are readily apparent. The first is the clear pleasure he took in recounting his collecting activities in the form of adventure and, importantly for the future, for a popular as well as a specialist audience. The second is that the article makes it clear that MacGillivray was, from the first, prepared and able to secure local assistance in procuring his specimens, a talent that would greatly assist him throughout his career.

MacGillivray made his way to a farm on the Paterson River - an area rich in plant, animal and bird life. One specimen he was particularly eager to secure was that of a red-necked pademelon (called by MacGillivray *Halmaturus thetidis* now called *Thylogale thetis*). Although he had often seen pademelons he had failed until this point to secure a specimen, 'I accordingly resolved to procure the aid of some blacks in the vicinity, in order thoroughly to beat the bush and have a grand field day.'[26]

MacGillivray's grand field day began when he started into the bush with a local aboriginal man identified by the inscription on his King Plate, or gorget,[27] as 'Tom, King of Dunmore'.[28] MacGillivray wrote:

> I could not help being amused at the ridiculous figure cut by my royal friend. He was entirely naked, with the exception of his back and part of the shoulders, to cover which some one had given him the wreck of an old shooting-coat – patches and streaks of white paint, the remains of last night's "coorobory," ornamented his face and legs, and he carried over his arm an old dragoon's carbine. ...[29]

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[26] MacGillivray, 'Notes on Australian Natural History', 1487.

[27] Either term can be used. Jakelin Troy uses gorget as the plates were not only given to men or those deemed to be leaders and the style is clearly based on the military gorget. See Jakelin Troy, *King Plates, A history of Aboriginal Gorgets* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1993), 1.

[28] David Kaus, Curator, National Museum of Australia, in a phone call on 17/06/09 – thinks that there is possibly photo of Tom "King of Dunmore" in Mitchell Library at Small pictures file, Australian Aboriginals No.31 The spear he is holding is appropriate for the region. Caption reads 'Tom, King of Dunm'. Also see article 'Fortunate recovery of a child', *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser,* 30 November 1844.

[29] MacGillivray, 'Notes on Australian Natural History', 1487.

Tom explained what MacGillivray was seeking to his companions and MacGillivray persuaded them to assist him with the aid of tobacco and the promise of further provision of such. While they spoke about the hunt, a fire was lit and some of the tobacco was smoked. MacGillivray continued in a tone suggesting an easy interaction with his local assistants:

> While I was waiting with great impatience until my sable friends had finished their smoking bout, a fine pademelon was driven close to us by the dogs, and came in sight, clearing the bushes in fine style, but having my gun ready, I tumbled him over while making a flying leap. The astonishment of the group of natives seemed to know no bounds – they clapped their hands, laughed, and almost screamed with delight.[30]

The hunt continued at a furious pace:

> I had scarcely reloaded, before another pademelon cleared the path at a couple of bounds, - by a short run I cut off an angle and took him in the flank, while crossing a small opening. Bang! went one barrel – missed – bang! went another, and his hind legs were broken.[31]

MacGillivray was intent on displaying as much skill with his pen as with his gun, carefully evoking the scene for his readers:

> By this time the whole cover had been drawn, and the inmates were scampering about in all directions chased by the dogs; and spears, waddies, and boomerangs were thrown in quick succession, but without much success. Meanwhile, I made my way for a thicket where everything was apparently quiet, and dropping on one knee, soon had the satisfaction of seeing a pademelon hopping along, pausing every now and then, sitting upright on his haunches to reconnoiter. Now is the time – the clicking of the lock caught his ear, and he turned his head downwards, preparing for a bound, but it was too late. Silently reloading, I kept the same position, - another and another hopped past, when a right and a left stretched them on the ground.[32]

The management of relationships between the ship's crew and the populations they encountered was an ever-present issue for all on board. For MacGillivray this would be one of the most significant elements of the voyage. As is shown in the above account, unlike some others on board, MacGillivray's occupation demanded contact with native populations in order to succeed. The voyage of the *Fly* and the experiences and knowledge that it brought were to shape MacGillivray's abilities and attitudes toward this particular aspect of his work.

Although traffic through the region had greatly increased by the 1840s, the *Fly* was operating in a very different atmosphere to the voyages that would follow it in the next three decades. The establishment of good relationships was critical to the success of the voyage and had been emphasized within Blackwood's orders. These stated that:

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[30] *Ibid*

[31] *Ibid*, 1488.

[32] *Ibid*

> Some books with which you have been supplied record the treacherous conduct of the natives of the small islands in Torres Strait; while those of New Guinea and the Louisiades bear a somewhat better character: but in all such places you should be equally on your guard. You will endeavour to preserve an amicable intercourse with them at all times.[33]

The orders went on to state that all former offences should appear to have been forgotten. Fair conduct during trading was emphasised as was good conduct toward the female population.

> It would be a subject of deep regret, that an expedition devoted to the noble purpose of acquiring and diffusing beneficial knowledge, should be stained by hostilities and bloodshed.[34]

Adherence to these orders was shortly to be tested.

The *Fly* departed from Port Stephens on 17 December to commence the central task of her voyage – the survey of the Great Barrier Reef. The survey commenced on 21 December at Sandy Cape and continued on through the Capricorn group of islands and Swain's Reefs. In February 1843 the *Fly* commenced a survey of Port Bowen. From here they travelled on through the Percy Islands to West Hill a little north of Broad sound. The next survey took in the area from West Hill, to the northern part of the Whitsunday passage. From 30 March until 17 May 1843 the *Fly* anchored at Cape Upstart while maintenance to the ship and her boats was carried out. On 18 May they sailed and anchored in Rockingham Bay. The survey of Rockingham Bay took the remainder of the month. The *Fly* then sailed north and anchored at Lizard Island on 4 June. Little did MacGillivray realise how important a part this small island was to play in his future life.

The next piece of work involved the survey of the outer edge of the northern part of the Barrier reef. By mid June the lack of fresh provisions was starting to take a toll. Twelve cases of scurvy were on the medical list and securing fresh food for the crew became a pressing issue. It was at this point of the voyage of the *Fly* that interactions with the Australian native population would become more complex. On 25 June 1843 the first violent encounter occurred between the crew of the *Fly* and Australian Aborigines. Up until this point, other than a small incident near Cape Melville a few days earlier, relations had been peaceful and trading had occurred at a number of locations along the coast.[35] The *Bramble* had been dispatched to the mainland to obtain a meridian distance between the reef and Cape Direction. Jukes had asked to accompany the expedition and, as Yule was suffering badly from rheumatism, offered to 'look after the natives' in order that Yule could concentrate on his work.[36] Archie McClatchie, the ship's assistant surgeon, and Jukes had encountered two men in a canoe upon landing. Friendly relations were established. The group ascended some small cliffs back from the beach in order to take their readings. Yule took his longitude readings but it was decided that latitude would best be taken from back at the beach. The two Aboriginal men encountered by Jukes and McClatchie were joined by another and four or five others were seen to be making their way down to the two boats that had been left at the beach. The surveying party started to make their way back to the boats. Jukes assumed that an attack would not be made as they outnumbered the 'natives'. Nevertheless he urged McClatchie that caution was needed and turned back to speak to Yule. On asking Yule if there were any men still to come down, Yule replied that one was still behind him. Jukes saw the man, Bayley, coming through the bush about fifteen yards away. Directly behind him he saw another man in the bush. He shouted a warning to Bayley and saw an Aboriginal man now with a spear notched in his throwing stick. Jukes immediately drew both triggers of his gun but it misfired. At the same instant the spear was released and Bayley fell, the spear firmly lodged between his shoulder blades. Jukes attempted to fire his gun again but with the same result. Yule attempted to help Bayley, who was lying in agony on the ground pleading to have the spear removed. Yule broke off the spear but insisted that he could not remove the spear-head until they were back on board the *Fly*. Bayley's attacker showed himself again as the party carried the injured man back towards the boats. This time Juke's gun fired successfully and the man quickly disappeared. The spear was removed with difficulty when the group returned to the ship, but the point and barb remained in the wound. Bayley took three days to die.

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[33] Jukes, *Narrative*, Vol. 2, 260.
[34] *Ibid*

The murder of Bayley would have been MacGillivray's first real exposure to the violence that was an ever-present threat in the work in which he was engaged. There can be no doubt that it would have coloured his own perception of future interactions with native populations and introduced a greater element of wariness to his exploring activities. MacGillivray's own response to the incident is unknown but an examination of Jukes reaction may give some picture of how it would have affected him. The incident had an obviously profound effect on the normally mild Jukes who recorded in his narrative that:

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[35] On 17 June about a mile south of Cape Melville Jukes, Blackwood, and Mr Mackay had had friendly intercourse with a group of Aboriginal people. Jukes had given a necklace of glass beads and the Aboriginal people had shown the group where water could be obtained. As they were heading back to the boat spears were thrown at them and Jukes fired his gun near to one of them, attempting not to hit him. Jukes, *Narrative*, Vol. 1, 99-102.

[36] *Ibid*, 107.

> It was the first time in my life in which I had seen wounds (and, as it turned out death) inflicted in open field, or in any kind of strife, and the sensations were as new to me as they were unpleasant. A burning feeling of mixed rage and grief, and a kind of animal craving for revenge, seemed to take possession of the heart, and a reluctance to leave the spot till some kind of amends had been obtained.[37]

The same anger was obviously shared by the many on board the *Fly*. Jukes went on to say that:

> I felt that the life of one of my own shipmates, whatever his rank might be, was far dearer to me than that of a wilderness of savages, and that to preserve his life or avenge his death I could willingly shoot a dozen of these black fellows; and I could read the same feelings in the eyes of those around me. Nor was this feeing very transient; for many days or weeks after, it would have been felt as a relief by all those who saw Bayley's fall, to have come into collision with any party of black fellows they could have been justified in firing on.[38]

It was as well that no suitable provocation presented itself. This is a candid account of his and his shipmates' feelings, and an important one in the context of the broad history of contact during this period.

MacGillivray's brother-in-law Beaton recounted one particular incident that is supposed to have taken place at some stage during the voyage of the *Fly* which is particularly relevant to the issue of MacGillivray's relationship with native populations. Beaton wrote of MacGillivray:

> He often ventured into the woods alone in quest of specimens, though he knew that they were swarming with savages who regarded every stranger as a natural enemy. On one occasion he had wandered many miles into the bush, and shot several specimens of tropical birds; the rustling of the fallen leaves told him that the natives were watching his movements, but he merely kept his rifle on full cock, and went fearlessly on. On reaching a fountain in the midst of the forest, he stooped down to drink; before his lips had touched the water he saw reflected on its surface the figure of a savage with his lance poised prepared to strike.[39]

MacGillivray's response to this threat was instant.

> Quick as lightning he wheeled round, brought his rifle to bear, and shot him dead on the spot. It was no time for sentiment or indecision; his own life was still in danger. He loaded his rifle and began to retrace his steps towards the shore. He had a long and weary march of eight hours before he saw the mast of the Fly tapering on the horizon, and had repeatedly to keep the savages at bay by presenting his rifle; while he was so

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[37] *Ibid*, 111.

[38] *Ibid*, 114.

[39] Beaton, 'A Martyr to Science', 426.

> exhausted with thirst that he plucked the birds he had shot with his teeth and drunk the blood.[40]

Exposure to the violence of Bayley's death could have been responsible for or merely licensed MacGillivray's willingness and capacity to act decisively, and violently, if and when he felt the need. An examination of the above episodes – hunting for pademelon, the murder of Bayley and MacGillivray's own rapid and merciless response to a threat to his own person – creates a picture of the complexity of interactions presented during the voyage of the *Fly*. The young man from Edinburgh was learning about survival in hostile situations and environments. He was being tutored in the art of diplomacy and being given the opportunity to obtain help where help would enable him to carry out his duties more efficiently. The ability to negotiate this complexity would be one of the great lessons that MacGillivray would take from his experiences during these years.

By August 1843 the *Fly*'s survey was completed up to the Murray Islands – the eastern most islands of the Torres Strait. The *Fly* left the Torres Strait on 14 August, touched at Port Essington and then travelled on to Timor. It is easy to gloss over such a voyage, but travel of this distance and in these waters would, even today, be a significant undertaking under sail. The *Fly*'s first stay at Port Essington was a brief one, a mere six days. In his narrative Jukes went to considerable lengths to ensure that the reader was left in little doubt as to his feelings about the settlement. 'I believe it to be utterly worthless as a colony, or as an agricultural or commercial possession, and conceive the only argument for our continuing to hold it must be a political one.[41] Jukes was certainly correct in attributing political motivations for the continuation of the settlement. This outpost of Empire was seen as a key way of safeguarding British maritime and commercial interests.[42] From Timor the *Fly* sailed on and anchored on 30 September at Swan River. It remained in the area for a month before returning to Hobart and then sailing on to Sydney, anchoring there on 13 January 1844.

Once in Sydney, Blackwood set about negotiating with the colonial government regarding arrangements for the construction of a beacon on Raine Islet which would mark an entrance through the reefs. The erection of such beacons had been a priority within

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[40] *Ibid*

[41] Jukes, *Narrative*, Vol. 1, 365-366.

[42] James Cameron, 'The Northern Settlements: Outposts of Empire', in Pamela Statham (ed), *The Origins of Australia's Capital Cities* (Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 279.

Blackwood's instructions and he was pleased to have found a suitable location.[43] Blackwood's timing was unfortunate; the colony was struggling financially and was unable or unwilling to provide significant assistance. In the end an agreement was reached to provide twenty convicts, mostly masons and quarrymen and a small cutter, The *Prince George.*[44]

The lengthy delay while these negotiations took place meant that the *Fly* was in Sydney for a period of over two months. It was while in Sydney during this period that MacGillivray spent a considerable time in the company of the Australian based collectors John Gilbert and Frederick Strange. This was probably the only time that the three collectors were gathered in the same location and it would have been a fascinating meeting. Gilbert and Strange are regarded as among Australia's best-known natural history collectors, largely due to their association with the noted ornithologist John Gould. Gilbert in particular was a collector of unrivalled industry and talent. Clemency Fisher has spent considerable time documenting Gilbert's collections and has shown that he was personally responsible for the discovery of more bird and mammal species in Australia than any other collector.[45] These two men were valuable contacts for a young collector such as MacGillivray.

By 1844 both Gilbert and Strange had been working in Australia for around six years – Gilbert first visited in 1839 in company with John Gould. The first known record of Strange is from South Australia in 1838.[46] It is probable that MacGillivray and Gilbert first met while the *Fly* was in Western Australia.[47] Gilbert was certainly in Fremantle at the time. Gilbert returned to Sydney at the end of January 1844. He and MacGillivray were resident during this period at a boarding house near the Rocks, known by some as 'The Naturalists home' run by Strange's wife, Rosa Prince.[48] It is possible that when Gilbert and MacGillivray had met in Western Australia Gilbert had suggested Strange's wife's boarding house as a possible place for MacGillivray to lodge when in Sydney. In February Strange had written to Gould letting him know that Gilbert was, at that time, staying at his boarding house. In June 1844 Strange again wrote to Gould:

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[43] Blackwood to Beaufort, 31 December 1843, Great Britain. Hydrographic Dept., Australian Joint Copying Project, National Library of Australia, microform 2330, Surveyors' letters, 1828-1909.

[44] Jukes, *Letters and extracts*, 208.

[45] Clemency Fisher and John Calaby, 'The Top of the Top End: John Gilbert's Manuscript Notes for John Gould on Vertebrates from Port Essington and Cobourg Peninsula (Northern Territory, Australia); with Comments on Specimens Collected during the Settlement Period 1838 to 1849, and Subsequently', *The Beagle, Records of the Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory*, Supplement 4 (December 2009): 19. Clemency Fisher, *The importance of early Victorian natural historians in the discovery and interpretation of the Australian Fauna, with special reference to John Gilbert*, Phd Thesis, Liverpool Polytechnic, 1992, Fig 67. Fisher notes that of the 1800-odd species and subspecies of Australian birds and mammals Gilbert was responsible for collecting at least 110. Of full species he collected about 60. Fisher has charted this information to demonstrate that this means that Gilbert is responsible for the collection of around 8% of Australia's bird and mammal life.

[46] H.M Whittell, 'Frederick Strange: A biography', *Australian Zoologist*, 11 (1947): 99.

[47] See note by H.M Whittell in *The Emu*, 45 (Oct 1945): 176. Whittell makes a mistake referring to HMS *Herald* rather than HMS *Fly*.

[48] Ian Loch, 'A Strange Tale', *Australian Natural History*, 23 (1989): 194.

> H.M. ship Fly have now been away about three months and Mr MacGillivray is gone in her he used to stope [sic] with me when he was in Sydney and Mr Gilbert have been gone about the same time Beyong [sic] New England and I have not heard of him since he left.[49]

In September Gilbert joined with Ludwig Leichhardt's exploring party heading for Port Essington. Gilbert jumped at the opportunity of joining the group and was excited by the collecting territory the expedition would provide him with access to. He wrote to Strange from the Darling Downs in September 1844 stating:

> I am glad to hear so good an opinion of MacGillivray, as I told you at first I could not think he would act otherwise; if we succeed in getting across I shall most likely surprise him at Port Essington, should a ship be leaving for that port; drop him a line to say I am on the way.[50]

Gilbert would not live to surprise MacGillivray at Port Essington. He was speared and killed on 28 June 1845 near the Gulf of Carpentaria. Strange continued working as a private collector and, after Gilbert's demise, secured work from Gould. In 1854 he too was speared and killed while collecting at the Percy Islands.[51]

Gilbert and Strange made a significant impression on MacGillivray. In subsequent writings MacGillivray made frequent mention of conversations he had with the pair during this visit and mourned both their losses – personally and to the profession of natural history. Of Gilbert he wrote that he '…saw much of him a few months before his departure on his last and fatal journey, and cannot help paying a parting tribute to the perfect integrity and indomitable energy of his late friend.'[52] As well as providing valuable information and advice to the young Scot, Gilbert's and Strange's vast experience of the Australian continent and its richest collecting areas would have been an invaluable aid to MacGillivray, on this, his first major voyage to the country. The lives of Gilbert and

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[49] Frederick Strange to John Gould in Ian McAllan, 'John Gilbert's Missing Months', *Memoirs of the Queensland Museum*, 35, 1 (1994): 156.

[50] Gilbert to Strange in Whittell, 'Frederick Strange', 104.

[51] Ian Loch states that Strange's expedition could be one of Australia's earliest private scientific voyages. On board the vessel was Walter Hill who went on to become the first Colonial Botanist in Queensland and William Spurling who was a conchologist. Strange had been good friends with George French Angas. When news reached Angas of Strange's death he composed a poem in Strange's honour. For details see Loch, 'A Strange Tale', 194-195.

[52] John MacGillivray, 'An account of Raine's Islet', 1480.

Strange would have served to illustrate to MacGillivray the potential that the career of a travelling naturalist or collector held. Their deaths too, would have highlighted the dangers associated with the work that they shared such a passion for.

One place in particular that Gilbert would, no doubt, have spoken to MacGillivray about was the northern settlement of Port Essington. Port Essington was one of the most significant locations visited by MacGillivray during the voyage of the *Fly*. He had, as previously mentioned, already visited the place for a few days in August 1843 but it was perhaps Gilbert's descriptions of his own experiences of the area and the rich harvests it had yielded which prompted MacGillivray's next visit in September 1844 to be of extended duration. During his stay at Port Essington Gilbert had collected over fifty new bird or mammal species.[53]

The main object of the next cruise for those not pursuing items of natural history was, however, the construction of the beacon on Raine Islet. The island was reached in late May[54] and the ship's company set about landing stores and opening a quarry on the east side of the island. Today Raine Island is a nature reserve subject to some of the highest levels of environmental protection available. It is one of the most significant seabird rookeries on the Reef and a nesting site for the green turtle, which is listed as vulnerable.[55] Eighty one different species of sea birds have been recorded on the island since 1843.[56] The seabirds were, according to MacGillivray, the most interesting part of his visit to the island. He documented over eighteen species of birds, several of them new to science. The birds clustered everywhere on the tiny island. MacGillivray wrote:

> Crossing the reef, we landed on a steep sandy beach, and a few yards further brought us upon one of those vast breeding-places of birds, of which none but an eye-witness can form an adequate idea. The ground was so thickly strewed with eggs, that we could not walk about without occasionally crushing them under foot; myriads of terns, noddies and boobies darkened the air around; the mingling of loud, harsh, discordant cries was absolutely deafening and caused even a painful sensation, which, with the stench from numbers of putrefying carcasses and other sources, was almost insufferable.[57]

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[53] Fisher and Calaby, 'The Top of the Top End', 8. This remarkable catalogue goes on to detail Gilbert's (and others) collections made at Port Essington on a specimen by specimen basis. It documents where specimens are now held, who collected them and when.

[54] Jukes says 27 May, MacGillivray says 29 May.

[55] George N. Batianoff & N.J Cornelius, 'Birds of Raine Island: population trends, breeding behaviour and nesting habits', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Queensland*, 112 (2005): 1.

[56] Raine Island National Park (Scientific) Management Statement 2006-2016, Cairns Marine District, Northern Region – effective December 2006, http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/register/p02061aa.pdf (accessed 25 August 2010).

[57] MacGillivray, 'An account of Raine's Islet', 1473-1481.

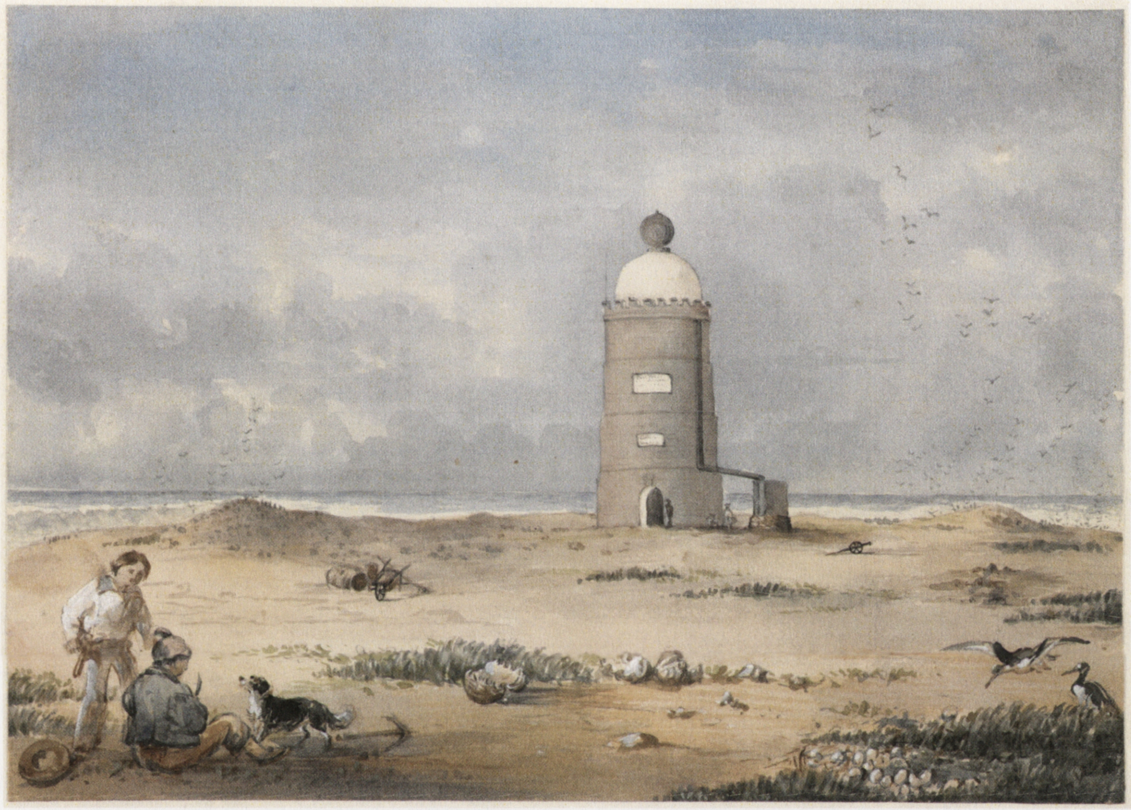

Plate 8: 'Beacon built at Raines Islet during the voyage of HMS *Fly*.'
(Edwin Augustus Porcher, watercolour, 1844. National Library of Australia)

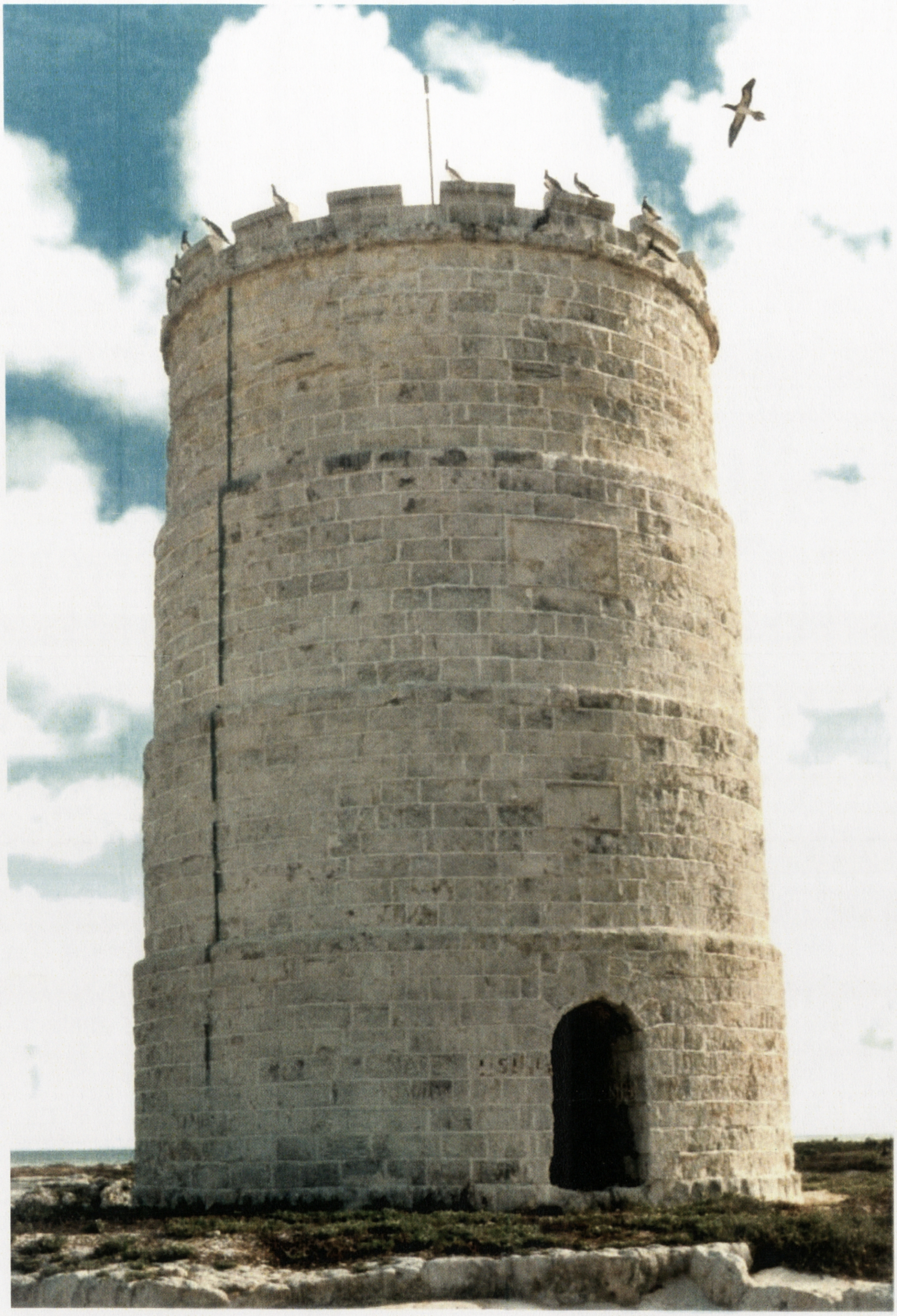

Plate 9: Raine Island beacon
(Photo: John Cornelius. Image supplied by Department of Environment and Resource Management, Queensland)

In this instance collecting required little skill:

> The birds appeared so little accustomed to the sight of man, that many, busily engaged in incubation, allowed of very close approach. Some frigate-birds sitting upon their nests awaited our coming up with perfect composure, and stoutly defended their eggs with open beak, nor would they take to wing until pushed off the nest with a stick.[58]

It is perhaps as well that the beacon took only four months to construct. The impact of the shore party on the island's wildlife was another point noted by MacGillivray who commented that:

> The eggs and newly-fledged young of the tern and noddy were turned to good account by the party established upon the island, and with an occasional turtle, now and then some fish, and abundance of fresh vegetables, they fared considerably better than on board ship. I amused myself one day with making a calculation of the consumption of young birds and eggs during the month of June, and found it to amount, at the lowest reasonable estimate, to 3,000 of the former, and 1410 dozen of the latter.[59]

The casual way in which he undertook and reported this 'amusing task' is a reminder of how much sensibilities have changed. MacGillivray's documentation of the impact of this visit on the birds of Raine Island is an example of the havoc caused by settlement on island species generally. The destruction of the Mount Pitt Bird of Norfolk Island as documented by Tim Bonyhday in *The Colonial Earth*, provides another such story. One conservative tally of the destruction of these birds showed the total killed by colonists between 10 April and 16 July 1790 was 172, 184 however Bonyhday suggests that the total may have been closer to 300,000.[60] It is little wonder that this particular petrel can no longer be found on Norfolk Island. Island species have shown themselves to be particularly vulnerable to the impacts of settlement as both these examples demonstrate.[61]

MacGillivray's account of the island, written for the *Zoologist*, went on to detail the major items of geological, ornithological, botanical, entomological and ichthyologic interest. MacGillivray lamented that his botanical specimens obtained during his visit decayed for want of proper storage on board the ship. He remained on the island for a month but had, by this time, exhausted the possibilities for collecting that the island had to offer. He gratefully accepted an invitation to go on board the *Bramble,* which was to undertake a survey of the Endeavour Strait – Melville and Jukes also transferred to the *Bramble* for this period. The beacon, designed by the *Fly*'s carpenter Mr Moore, was completed by mid September and was a substantial achievement. It stands 40 feet high, 30 feet in diameter with five feet thick walls at the base and is listed today in the Register of the National Estate as 'the most important historical monument in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park'.[62]

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[58] *Ibid*

[59] *Ibid.* In similar vein MacGillivray also commented that: '*Rallus philippensis* is very abundant all over the island, the dense succulent herbage affording excellent shelter … It runs with amazing velocity, seldom taking to wing, and is very wary. This unwillingness to rise from the ground enabled us to procure great numbers for the table, by means of a kangaroo-dog, which became very expert at finding and catching them. In one day not less than forty-five were killed by the dog or taken with the hand.'

[60] Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth*, 16.

[61] Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth*, 39.

From Raine Island the *Fly* set course through the Endeavour strait and then on to Port Essington. Her stay was, once again, brief. However, this time when she departed for Sourabaya in the island of Java, MacGillivray remained behind in order to carry out some collecting using the settlement of Victoria, Port Essington, as his base. In all MacGillivray remained resident at the remote outpost for almost four months.

MacGillivray had strong opinions regarding the military post of Port Essington. By 1844 it had been established for almost seven years and, in MacGillivray's opinion, was still struggling against numerous ills. MacGillivray published a letter in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in October 1845 based on his experience of the settlement in which he condemned it as being unfit for agriculture, useless for trade, hopeless as a port of refuge for those lost or shipwrecked and unhealthy for its inhabitants.[63] The health and wellbeing of the residents of the settlement were further compromised by the lack of sufficient food of adequate quality. MacGillivray wrote that 'There is probably not a ship in the British navy the men of which are not better victualled than the residents of Port Essington.' MacGillivray's article advocated the entire abandonment of the site and argued that an establishment on Cape York would better serve the aims of those keen to see a viable northern Australian settlement.

MacGillivray's article was widely read. In a letter to the Governor of New South Wales, George Gipps, Jukes praised it as being entirely accurate.[64] Jukes also seconded MacGillivray's opinion that Cape York offered far better prospects for a northern Australian settlement. When Gipps wrote to Lord Stanley, Secretary for Colonies, in London recommending a settlement on Cape York, he enclosed MacGillivray's article and commended it to Stanley as being 'very sensible'.[65] Blackwood also wrote recommending Cape York – in this recommendation MacGillivray, Jukes and Blackwood were in complete accord.[66]

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[62] Search on Raine Island Beacon, http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/places/index.html (accessed 9 October 2010).

[63], 'To the Editor', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 October 1845. Also reproduced in J.M.R. Cameron, *Letters from Port Essington, 1838-1845* (Darwin: Historical Society of the Northern Territory, 1999), 155-160.

[64] Jukes, to Gipps, 22 October 1845, Mitchell Library, CO201/360, 463-74. Letter reproduced in Cameron, *Letters from Port Essington*, 160-165.

Despite his feeling regarding the settlement's future, MacGillivray was in no doubt about the value of Port Essington as regards the building of his collection. The one aspect of Port Essington of which MacGillivray was able to speak highly was of its attraction for the 'sportsman'[67]. The area surrounding the settlement proved a rich and rewarding, if not always physically pleasant, collecting ground. MacGillivray had perhaps been inspired by Gilbert's success in the area in 1840-1841 and, would later state that in pursuing his researches in the area he was 'following up the researches of my late and much lamented friend Gilbert'.[68]

MacGillivray wrote up one of his Port Essington collecting expeditions for the *Zoologist* as 'Ornithological Excursion to the North coast of New Holland'.[69] In October 1844, MacGillivray, accompanied by Lieutenant Ince,[70] some others and some 'natives', set out from Victoria settlement. After a few days at Moormal, twelve miles south of Port Essington, the party moved two miles further south where they constructed a rough tent out of some sails set back slightly from the beach and close to a well. They camped near a small lagoon which was the chief focus of their visit. MacGillivray used the article to detail the daily routine of a travelling naturalist, which he noted 'seldom varied'.

> Earliest dawn generally found us on our way to the lagoon, on reaching which we proceeded to search the opposite sides. Our first attention was devoted to the procuring of a few geese (*Anseranas melanoleuca*) and black ducks (*Anas superciliosa*) for food, which being accomplished, the birds had a respite for the remainder of the day. Now commenced the hardest but most pleasant portion of our daily labour, the wading about for three or four hours, immersed in water up to the middle, (with one's ammunition in his cap as the only dry place about him), at one time dashing through the water in hot

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[65] Gipps, to Stanley, Her Majesty's Secretary for Colonies, 15 December 1845, Mitchell Library, CO201/360, 451-4. Reproduced in Cameron, *Letters from Port Essington*, 168-169.

[66] Thomas Huxley's assessment of the prospects of the settlement following his visit there on board HMS *Rattlesnake* in 1848 were also damning. He wrote 'The only place we have visited since my last budget to you was Port Essington, a military post which has been an object of much attention for some time past in connection with the steam navigation between Sydney and India. It is about the most useless, miserable, ill-managed hole in Her Majesty's dominions.' *Life and Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley*, 43.

[67] Letter appeared as a letter to the editor, *Sydney Morning Herald*, Wednesday, 15 October 1845. Also reproduced in Cameron, *Letters from Port Essington*, 157.

[68] John MacGillivray, *Narrative of the voyage of H.M.S. Rattlesnake : commanded by the late Captain Owen Stanley during the years 1846-1850, including discoveries and surveys in New Guinea, the Louisiade Archipelago, etc., to which is added the account of Mr. E.B. Kennedy's expedition for the exploration of the Cape York Peninsula [by William Carron]*, 2 Vols. (London: T. & W. Boone, 1852), Vol. 1, 154.

[69] John MacGillivray, 'Ornithological Excursion to the North Coast of New Holland', 1481-84.

[70] The nephew of John Gray of the British Museum.

> pursuit of a wounded egret, at another silently concealed behind a dead tree growing in the water, watching with palpitating heart until a pair of pigmy geese shall afford a chance of making a successful shot. …[71]

MacGillivray's article gives a clear indication of the rich collections the expedition provided. The birds encountered included the Comb-crested Jacana (*Parra gallinacea*), three tiny water-rails of the genus Porzana, glossy Ibis (*Falcinellus igneus*), white-headed stilts (*Himantopus leucocephalus*), snow white-heron, the flying goose or Green pygmy goose (*Nettapus pulchellus*), little grebe (*Podisceps nestor*), whistling duck (*Dendrocygna eytoni*) and the white duck (*Tadorna rajah*). As well as birds, the party encountered snakes and lizards around the edges of the lagoon. MacGillivray's article details the work of a naturalist once the sport of procuring the specimens was over. He wrote:

> After having afforded a morning meal to some thousands of hungry mosquitoes, we usually proceeded homewards, when the sun was rapidly becoming too powerful for travelling under. Breakfast over, and our pipes lit, we proceeded to skin the spoils of the morning, an operation occasionally retarded by myriads of ants, attracted by the scraps of flesh. The bill, legs, feet, eyelids, &c. required to be washed over with a solution of corrosive sublimate, and it was also necessary that the under surface of the wing at the carpal joint and the tarsus (except in very small birds) should be slit up, the muscles and tendons removed, and arsenical soap applied. In the evening another visit was paid to the lagoon, and some more specimens procured; at sunset we returned, packed up the skins which had been drying in the sun all day, and adjourned to a huge fire upon the beach, around which was usually assembled a large and motley party of whites and blacks, men, women and children.[72]

MacGillivray was quick to make the most of Aboriginal visitors to the camp to add to his ethnological observations.[73] During his time at Port Essington he compiled a vocabulary of approximately 500 words. This was not published within Jukes' narrative as by the time of publication MacGillivray had already returned to Australia on board HMS *Rattlesnake* and it was assumed that further work on the vocabulary would therefore be completed.[74]

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[71] MacGillivray, 'Ornithological Excursion to the North Coast of New Holland', 1483.

[72] *Ibid*, 1484.

[73] In his history of the settlement Jim Allen comments that the richness of ethnographic and natural history documentation of the area is perhaps the settlement's greatest legacy. Jim Allen, *Port Essington: The historical archaeology of a north Australian nineteenth-century military outpost*, (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2008), 131.

[74] Jukes, *Narrative*, Vol. 2, Appendix III, 275. The location of MacGillivray's word list for the area is still unknown. He added to the list during his time on HMS *Rattlesnake* but did not publish the list within the *Narrative* as it was too extensive. He notes in the Narrative that he will deposit the list at the British Museum however it has never been located. More recent works have attributed the missing word list to other authors – in particular the Italian Priest Father Confalonieri. Linguist Bruce Birch, has been working to locate the manuscript. In an email (21 June 2010) Birch spells out how the misappropriation occurred: 'It has been assumed by a number of scholars[1] that Confalonieri produced a vocabulary of four 'dialects' spoken on Cobourg, and that this document was given by James MacArthur, commandant of Port Essington, to John MacGillivray (1821-1867) a zoologist who visited Port Essington on a number of occasions during the 1840s. The assumption appears to be based on a passage from *Narrative of the Voyage of the Rattlesnake.* After mentioning Confalonieri's work on the languages of Port Essington, MacGillivray adds in a footnote, 'I regret that the arrangements for this work [i.e., the Narrative] will not admit of my publishing in the Appendix a Port Essington vocabulary, consisting of about 650 words, in four dialects, formed in 1844, and corrected and improved in 1848; the manuscripts will be deposited in the library of the British Museum.' (John MacGillivray, 1852,Vol 1, footnote to p. 157). However, (a) the note does not specifically attribute the vocabulary to Confalonieri; (b) the date of 1844, predates Confalonieri's arrival at Port Essington by 2 years, whereas whereas it aligns with MacGillivray's first visit to Port Essington as zoologist on the surveying

The camp and its provisions provided the necessary attraction for MacGillivray to undertake this element of his work. He continued:

> The abundant supply of game and fish enabled us to maintain a bountiful table, and numbers of aborigines frequented our camp for a share of the good things. We took care to turn these re-unions to some account, by extending our acquaintance with their language, manners and customs. At an early hour we retired to rest *sub dio*; one slept in the boat anchored off shore thirty or forty yards, and other in his blanket laid himself down by the fire, and gradually fell asleep while concocting some ingenious plan for the extermination of the whole genus *Culex*.[75] And now having given you the bright side of the picture, the reverse I leave to your own fertile imagination.[76]

Another invaluable aid MacGillivray met while in Port Essington was a young man called Neinmal who was a resident of the settlement during MacGillivray's visit[77]. Neinmal soon became MacGillivray's assistant in his natural history research and expeditions. Neinmal would, no doubt, have been present during the collecting excursion described above. He demonstrated considerable skill in the preparation of specimens. In his later narrative of the *Rattlesnake,* MacGillivray recalled an occasion when, detained in his camp by rain, he set about skinning and preparing a fish: 'Neinmal watched me attentively for some time and then withdrew, but returned in half an hour afterwards, with the skin of another fish in his hand prepared by himself, and so well done too, that it was added to the collection'.[78] Neinmal would also have secured specimens on MacGillivray's behalf as, according to Melville, MacGillivray had also taught him how to handle a gun cleverly.[79] As well as assisting MacGillivray in his collecting it can be assumed that Neinmal made a valuable contribution to MacGillivray's ethnographic and linguistic work. MacGillivray was clearly fond of Neinmal and praised his intelligence, docility and perception. He wrote 'latterly, he seemed even to read my very thoughts'.[80]

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voyage of the *Fly* under the direction of naturalist Joseph Beete Jukes; (c) Jukes records in his narrative of the voyage of the *Fly* "a vocabulary of about 500 words collected by Mr MacGillivray at Port Essington two appendices in his work, each of which contains his own quite extensive comparative vocabularies, the first comparing the lexicons of two Cape York Languages, and the second comparing those of three languages of the south coast of New Guinea. Given all this, it seems clear that the vocabularies MacGillivray mentions are his own, and not the work of Confalonieri.' [2] [1] See, for example, Lewis (1916), and Bleek (unpublished MS, 18??).[2] The third appendix to MacGillivray's *Narrative* is written by R.G. Latham, who states in a footnote that a grammatical sketch by Confalonieri was "given to Mr. Macgillivray [sic] by Mr. James MacArthur, and prefixed to the manuscript Port Essington Vocabulary . . ." This 'grammatical sketch', however, is most likely Confalonieri's phrase book, which subsequently found its way to Sir George Grey's collection, since the examples of pronouns which Latham cites all occur with the spellings of the phrase book. There is a chance of course that it is a separate document.

[75] A whole thesis could be written (and perhaps has been) on European reactions to mosquitoes and other biting insects. Melville, Jukes and MacGillivray all have magnificent passages as they contemplate these small beasts.

[76] MacGillivray,'Ornithological Excursion to the North Coast of New Holland', 1484.

[77] Spelt variously – Neinmal, Nienmal or Nienmil.

[78] MacGillivray, *Narrative of the Rattlesnake,* Vol. 1, 154-155.

[79] Melville, *Adventures of a griffin,* 179.

[80] MacGillivray, *Narrative of the Rattlesnake,* Vol. 1, 155.

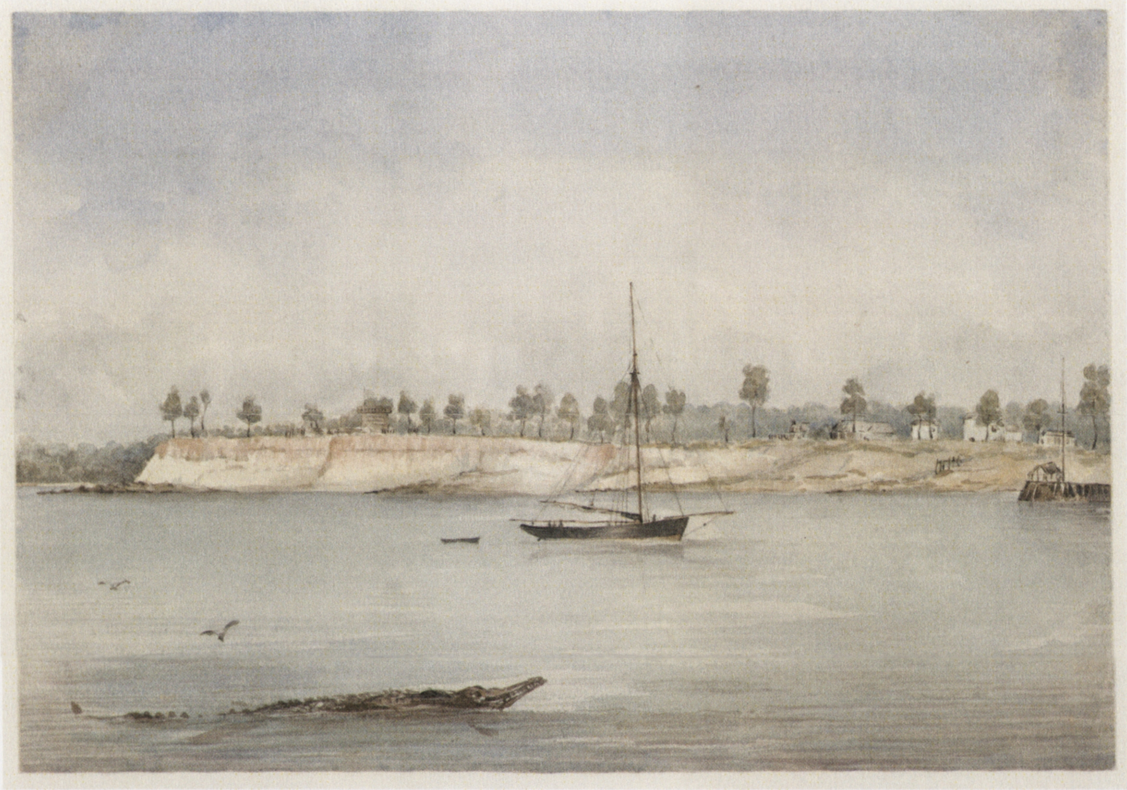

Plate 10: 'The settlement at Port Essington.'
(Edwin Augustus Porcher, watercolour, 1845. National Library of Australia)

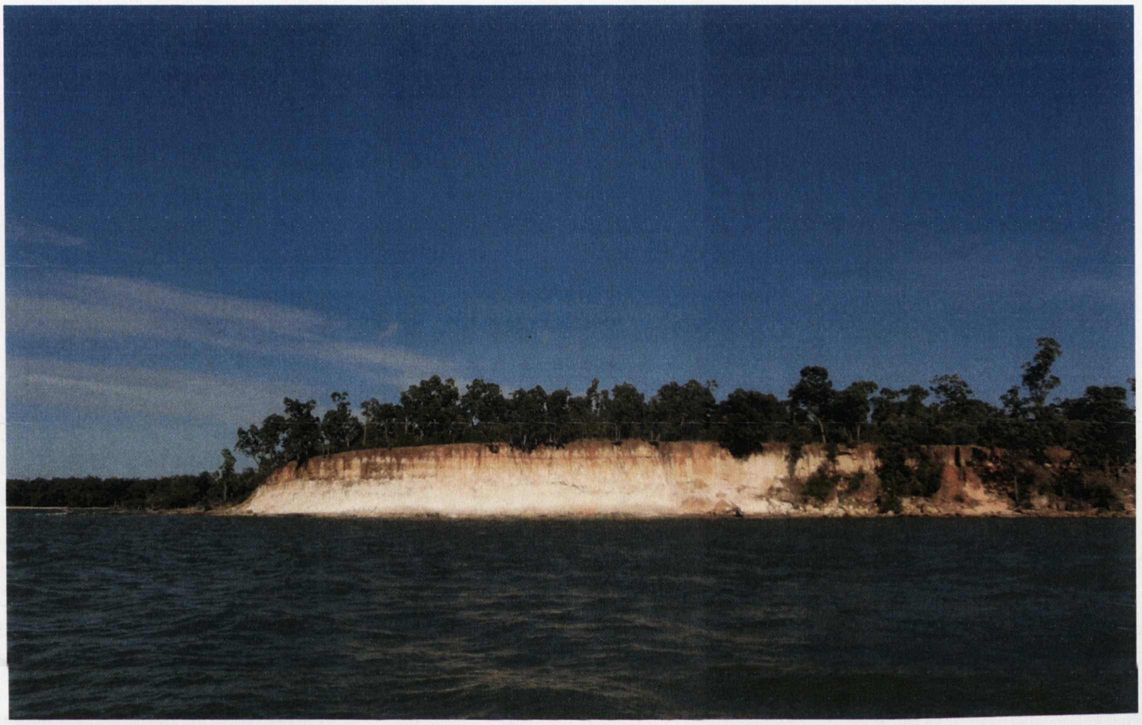

Plate 11: Cliffs of the inner harbour of Victoria Settlement, Port Essington.
(Photo: Kim McKenzie)

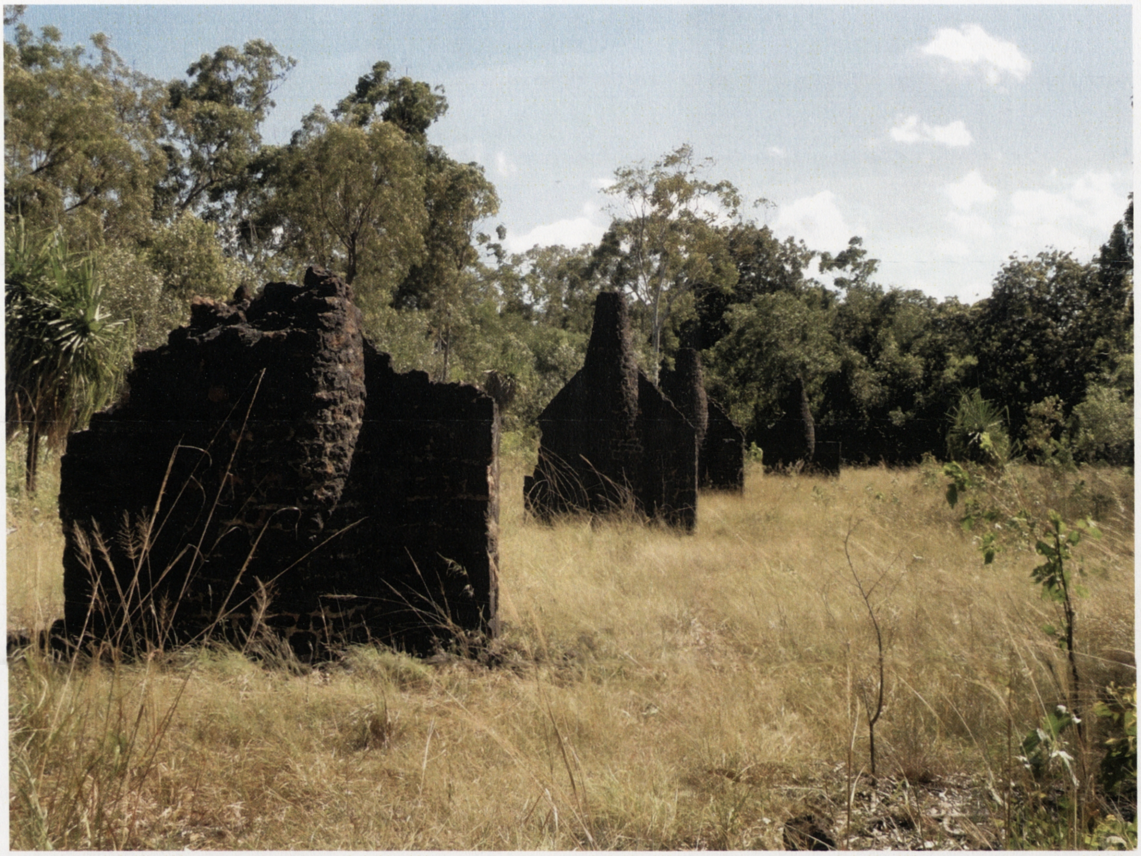

Plate 12: Remains of the married quarters chimneys, Victoria Settlement, Port Essington
(Photo: Kim McKenzie)

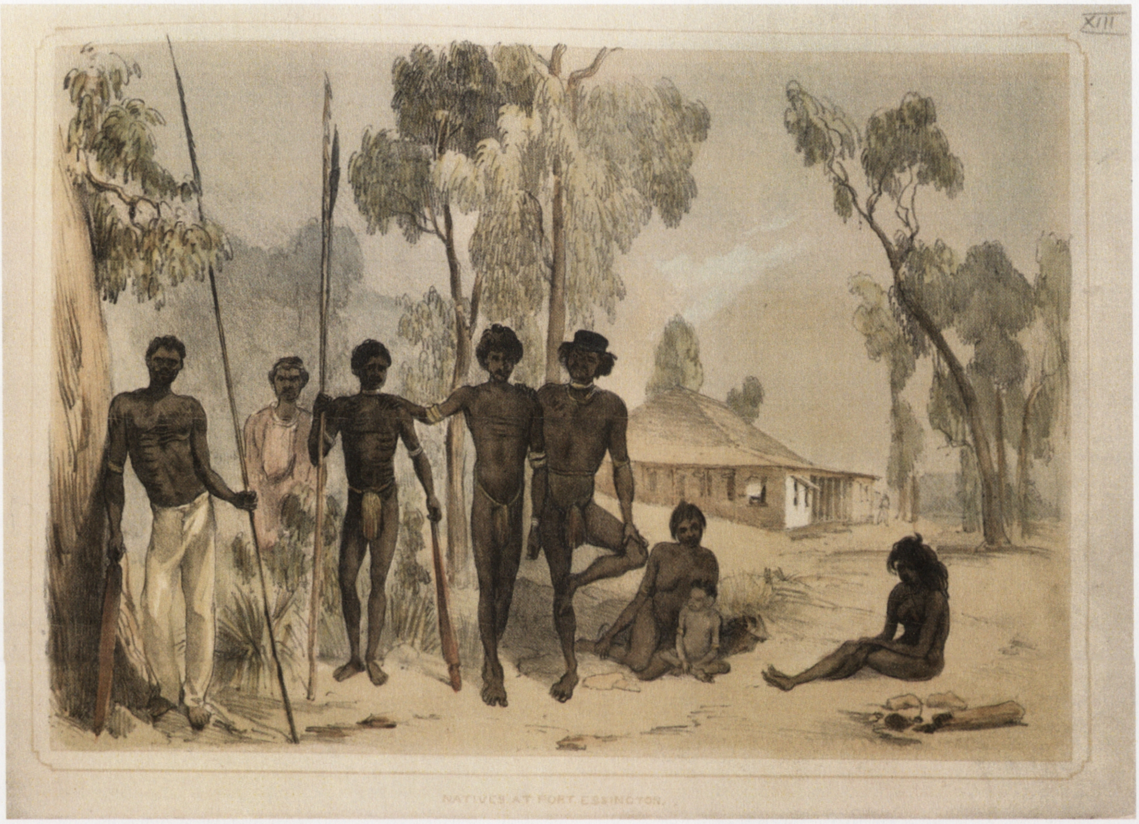

Plate 13: 'Natives of Port Essington.'
Men are identified from left: Jack White (servant to Dr. Whipple), Loco, Neinmal (servant to Mr. McGillivray) [sic], Alkanaara and Yungan. Identification from text accompanying lithograph.
(Harden S. Melville, hand coloured lithograph, 1849. National Library of Australia)

The *Fly* returned to the Victoria settlement on 27 January 1845. When she set sail for the Torres Strait and New Guinea on 4 February Neinmal came on board. According to John Sweatman he took on the role of 'a sort of servant, half protégé' to MacGillivray.[81] Neinmal remained with MacGillivray and the *Fly* for the remainder of the voyage, travelling to Singapore, Java and Sydney. According to MacGillivray he 'begged so hard to continue with me that I could not refuse him'.[82] He even asked to accompany MacGillivray back to England. However MacGillivray felt that, as he had no immediate prospect of returning to Australia, he could not undertake the responsibility of taking Neinmal with him and so when the *Fly* left Sydney Neinmal was taken back to Port Essington by Yule on board the *Bramble*.[83] Neinmal was clearly popular amongst the officers and crew. John Sweatman described him as:

> a good looking boy[84], and from his good temper and obliging disposition became a great favourite on board both ships. He soon learnt to speak English as well as we did, was a capital shot, a good singer, clever fisherman and a most amusing companion in a cruise: during the latter part of the time he was with us he waited on the commander at table as well as any white and what was not a little surprising in a native, never by any chance got drunk. He soon got into all our ways and seemed quite reconciled to civilized life, was most particular in his dress, generally wearing white jacket and waistcoat and carefully parting & brushing his hair, in fact we thought him quite reclaimed.[85]

Neinmal would eventually suffer for his close bond with his European friends. In 1847, accused of pilfering, an Aboriginal man was killed by a marine as he attempted to escape. The marine was sent to Sydney, put on trial for murder and was eventually acquitted.[86] However Aboriginal law demanded revenge. Rather than kill a European, Neinmal was selected as the retributive victim due to his close relationship with the whites.[87]

MacGillivray's time in and around Port Essington and his relationship with Neinmal were clearly significant elements of the voyage of the *Fly*. As the ship sailed out of Port Essington in February 1845 MacGillivray's hopes were high that another significant place would shortly be encountered – New Guinea. His hopes were soon to be frustrated.

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[81] Jim Allen and Peter Corris (eds), *The Journal of John Sweatman* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1977), 144.

[82] MacGillivray, *Narrative of the Rattlesnake*, Vol. 1, 155.

[83] *Ibid*, 156.

[84] Allen and Corris (eds), *The Journal of John Sweatman*, 144. There is some debate about Neinmal's age Melville estimated his age as about 15. See Melville, *Adventures of a griffin*, 137.

[86] D.J. Mulvaney, *Encounters in place : outsiders and Aboriginal Australians 1606-1985* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1989), 70.

[87] Accounts of killing in: MacGillivray, *Narrative of the Rattlesnake*, Vol. 1, 153. Peter Spillet, *Forsaken Settlement – An illustrated history of the settlement of Victoria, Port Essington North Australia 1838-1849* (Landsdowne Press, Melbourne 1972), 149 and John Mulvaney, *Encounters in Place*, 70.

Before sailing for New Guinea the *Fly* headed to the northeast portion of the Torres Strait in order to survey a route through the islands to the opening of the Endeavour Strait. In a letter to Gray MacGillivray complained that during this cruise 'there was an inconceivable paucity of interesting objects of Natural History'.[88] MacGillivray had been injured while hunting kangaroos at Port Essington and complained that he had been rendered almost a cripple for many weeks before the *Fly*'s arrival back at the settlement. The injury had been exacerbated by a degree of scurvy due to lack of fresh fruit and vegetables. This meant that for a number of months he was unable to wear shoes and go out collecting as he would have wished. It was not until mid May that he was sufficiently recovered to head out, along with the many other collectors of shells on board the ship, onto the reefs hunting for the many fine specimens of shells available.[89]

MacGillivray informed Gray that the intercourse with the people of the Torres Strait had been friendly apart from one incident on Darnley Island where 'a boat was once shot at with arrows, it would appear that this hostility arose from our having landed at a tabooed place, and this circumstance did not put a stop to further communication.'[90]

Once this portion of the survey was complete, the *Fly* made its way north heading for the coast of New Guinea. All those on board eagerly anticipated this part of the voyage. In a letter to Gray, MacGillivray noted with what joy the prospect of going to New Guinea created for the numerous collectors on the ship 'who had all along looked forward to it as another el dorado'.[91] In the same letter MacGillivray commented 'But alas! We were doomed to be miserably disappointed'.'[92] The New Guinea portion of the voyage was beset by difficulties. Opportunities to land were minimal and encounters with New Guineans were tense, fraught and often violent.

The *Fly* first anchored off New Guniea on 25th April 1845. MacGillivray wrote that:

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[88] MacGillivray to Gray, 30 June 1845, British Museum (Natural History). Dept. of Zoology. Keeper of Zoology Archives, Df300-299. Australia and New Zealand References M2599-2610, 1837-1969. Australian Joint Copying Project, National Library of Australia and State Library of New South Wales, Canberra: Australian Joint Copying Project, microform. Foreign letters, M2603, 222-225. .

[89] *Ibid*

[90] *Ibid*

[91] *Ibid*

[92] *Ibid*

> During our 5 weeks stay and survey of 100 miles of coast, the greater part of which had never before been seen by Europeans the ship was not able to approach the land nearer than from 5 to 10 miles on account of the mud flats extending off the coast...[93]

In order to access the coast Blackwood was forced to send small boats in to avoid the shallows. This would soon lead to a significant problem. On 2 May the *Midge* under Mr Pym and the second gig under Mr Harley set off to attempt to trace the coastal outline. Altogether twelve men and three officers were on board the two vessels. All contact was lost with the two boats and concerns quickly arose as to their fate. Blackwood and his crew would spend the greater part of their time during this cruise searching for the two missing boats – much to Blackwood's frustration and, once they were discovered, eventual anger.

Over the following weeks a number of landings were made along the New Guinea coast. On 8 May MacGillivray accompanied Blackwood and Ince while they made an attempt to land, but a heavy rolling sea nearly swamped them. They were forced to throw out their bow gun, gear and stores and finally struggled back to the *Prince George* late that night.

After this abortive attempt, MacGillivray's next opportunity to explore came when the cutter, under Mr Pollard, was revictualled for six days and sent to search the coast for the lost boats while the *Fly* beat up to the north to examine the coast in that direction. MacGillivray volunteered to accompany the cutter. Two days into the journey, the cutter entered into a large fresh water channel and landed near a deserted house. Once they returned to their boats, trouble began as they were surrounded by around 150 men in canoes. MacGillivray described the ensuing conflict in a letter to Gray:

> While beating out of the 2nd river, 9 canoes full of men attempted to cut us off, and we had to engage them at close quarter for ½ an hour before they were beaten off with very heavy loss. Signal fires were lit in every direction and the whole country alarmed, so it was not judged prudent to land any more.[94]

Other parties did make excursions on shore. Jukes accompanied Blackwood on several of these short missions. MacGillivray however was destined to be frustrated in his attempts to make it back onshore. His El Dorado lay tantalizingly in sight but out of reach – unfortunately for MacGillivray, not for the last time in his career.

Blackwood determined to return to Darnley Island to attempt to convince some of the islanders to accompany him back to New Guinea to assist him in communications with the locals while they made one last attempt to locate their missing boats. After a stay at Darnley Island of a few days, the *Fly* returned to the New Guinea coast on 29 May. Within hours of anchoring, Blackwood, and Jukes set out for land in the *Prince George*, accompanied by the cutter. MacGillivray complained to Gray that he had asked permission to go with the expedition but was refused by Blackwood 'on the score that there was "no room"!'.[95]

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[93] *Ibid*

[94] *Ibid*

Another violent encounter took place that evening when the *Prince George* was surrounded by a number of canoes. Blackwood considered this to be the first real act of unprovoked hostility and determined that swift action was required to 'punish them severely and teach them a lesson'.[96] In the ensuing affray Jukes estimated that 10 to 12 'natives' had been hit and that a number of these would have perished.[97]

The inability to secure good relations in New Guinea certainly affected the success of the *Fly*'s mission. In all around 140 miles of coast were charted. Blackwood judged this a good outcome in the circumstances.[98] The hostility of the people they encountered probably had the greatest impact on the naturalists on board as it meant that excursions on shore were limited at best and were of short duration. On the other hand the local population felt the impact sorely as MacGillivray related with the same casual indifference he displayed for the birds on Raine Island:

> The hostility of the natives was the chief obstacle to collecting and was productive of the most disastrous results to these misguided savages. In three severe conflicts lasting from ¼ to ½ an hour each, not less than 100 must have been killed and wounded.[99]

By the end of five weeks Blackwood felt that he had done everything that he could to locate his missing boats, at what he felt had been the expense of much surveying work. Provisions were running low and he decided that the only course of action was now to return once again to Darnley Island. The frustration of the crew at their lack of opportunity to explore New Guinea was keenly felt. Jukes expressed this most powerfully in his closing remarks on this portion of the survey. This passage, so often quoted as expressing the hopes and prospects for future exploration is perhaps better, more accurately read as a lament for opportunities lost.

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[95] *Ibid*

[96] Jukes, *Narrative*, Vol. 1, 264.

[97] Jukes, *Narrative*, Vol. 1, 266.

[98] Blackwood to Beaufort, 23 July 1845, United Kingdom Hydrographic Office, Surveyors' letters, 1828-1909.

[99] MacGillivray to Gray, 30 June 1845, British Museum (Natural History). Dept. of Zoology, microform, Foreign letters, M2603, 222-225.

> I know of no part of the world, the exploration of which is so flattering to the imagination, so likely to be fruitful in interesting results, whether to the naturalist, the ethnologist or the geographer, and altogether so well calculated to gratify the enlightened curiosity of an adventurous explorer, as the interior of New Guinea. New Guinea! the very mention of being taken into the interior of New Guinea sounds like being allowed to visit some of the enchanted regions of the Arabian Nights, so dim an atmosphere of obscurity rests at present on the wonders it probably contains.[100]

When the *Fly* arrived back at Darnley Island on 3 June they were informed that their missing boats had been seen passing by. They proceeded to Evans Bay at Cape York. MacGillivray was thrilled to be finally able to make some on-shore excursions and begin his collecting activities once more.[101] They travelled on after a stay of only a few days to Booby Island. Here they discovered one of the missing boats and messages to the effect that the crews had proceeded to Port Essington. Blackwood was furious. In letters to the Admiralty he described the officers' actions as 'dastardly'.[102] He felt that they had run away and made as quickly as they could for Booby Island where they knew that the *Fly* had left provisions for distressed merchant ships. Meanwhile he had wasted valuable time and resources searching for them. By July Blackwood had ordered a court of enquiry into what he considered their serious misconduct.

When they arrived at Port Essington on 12 June they discovered that their wayward crew-members were not the only fugitives taking refuge at the settlement. Around seventy people from two separate shipwrecks had been forced to take shelter at Port Essington. This sudden population increase was far too much for the already struggling settlement and it was determined that Blackwood would take fifty-five of these 'distressed British subjects' to Singapore.[103] The *Fly* arrived in Singapore on 5 July. Blackwood then went on to Malacca to communicate with Sir Thomas Chochrane, Admiral of the Station, regarding the courts martial of the two officers blamed for the 'missing boats' fiasco. Jukes and MacGillivray both remained in Singapore but found their efforts to collect frustrated by the local conditions. MacGillivray complained that venturing any further than five or six miles away was impossible unless accompanied by an armed party – partly because of the number of tigers but also because of Malay Chinese robbers who had lately committed several murders. On one occasion he and Jukes ventured out around 10 miles but rain hampered their collecting – and ruined their guns.[104]

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[100] Jukes, *Narrative*, Vol. 1, 291.

[101] MacGillivray to Gray, 30 June 1845, British Museum (Natural History). Dept. of Zoology, microform, Foreign letters, M2603, 222-225.

[102] Blackwood to Beaufort, 24 July 1845, Great Britain. Hydrographic Dept, Australian Joint Copying Project, National Library of Australia, microform 2330, Surveyors' letters, 1828-1909. Blackwood wrote 'Had it not been for our boats deserting us, I had hoped and I believe would have completed the part I allude to this last season. But for five weeks we were searching the Coast of N. Guinea for these dastardly officers – who had quietly run away to Booby Island where they knew we had left a Depot of provisions for Merchant Vessels – and from thence to Port Essington'.

[103] MacGillivray to Gray, 30 June 1845, British Museum (Natural History). Dept. of Zoology, microform, Foreign letters, M2603, 222-225.

During this time MacGillivray was busy thinking about his future and was excited by many of the places that he encountered during this part of the voyage. Lombok in particular captured his imagination. He greatly regretted being unable to buy numerous birds he saw for sale due to an inability to house them on board. He even suggested to Gray that he felt that a longer stint as a resident in the area would be worthwhile.

> Unlike those places on which the Dutch have obtained a footing, there would be no difficulty in obtaining from the Rajah permission to reside, and assistance in men etc for a naturalist, to whom a wide and probably untrodden field is there presented. I should have no objections to reside there for 2 years or so, being confident that trouble and expense would be amply repaid.[105]

The only note of anxiety in MacGillivray's letter is a small addendum to his long missive asking Gray if he was able to send word, or perhaps even a few shells, to his father, from whom, he complained, he had had no word for two years.[106]

In contrast to MacGillivray's letters - alive with the possibilities of remaining in the region - Blackwood's letters were firmly focused on returning home. The Captain's frustration and weariness with the voyage are recurring themes in all of his letters. He felt deeply dissatisfied with many of his officers and crew. He felt that his ship was not fit to be carrying out the task it had been allotted. He was worn out with anxiety and was unmistakably tired of the whole voyage. That the area had lost all allure for him is obvious when he stated that 'four seasons of the barrier and Torres strait are enough for any man - and might be too much for many.'[107] His letters to the Admiralty, while always stating that he would carry out his orders no matter how distasteful they would be for him, became increasingly despondent. In July he wrote:

> I will honestly confess I in no manner of way volunteer for the continuation of this Survey, I believe I have had my share of as bitter and uninteresting a bit of work as ever

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[104] MacGillivray to Gray, 31 July 1845 (continued from 30 June), British Museum (Natural History). Dept. of Zoology, microform, Foreign letters, M2603, 222-225.

[105] *Ibid*

[106] *Ibid*

[107] Blackwood to Beaufort, 19 July 1845, Great Britain. Hydrographic Dept., Australian Joint Copying Project, National Library of Australia, microform 2330, Surveyors' letters, 1828-1909

> came from the Hydrographic office, and my zeal after three such years as I have had is evaporated...[108]

Blackwood advised the Admiralty that they would make for Sydney and he would hope to receive his orders once there. They anchored in Sydney on 25 September 1845, and Blackwood would have felt much joy at receiving orders to return home.

The news for MacGillivray on arrival in Sydney was less welcome. A letter from Gray from the previous September informed him that he was being recalled to England by Lord Derby and asked that he depart as soon as possible. The reasons for this recall are not clear. MacGillivray's response simply states that he will:

> Refrain from making any comment on your statement of the reasons which have induced Lord Derby to recall me, or to vindicate myself, as my probable arrival in England in June 1846 will enable me personally to myself explain various circumstances which if entered upon now would employ much time - more time than is left me.[109]

It is clear now that MacGillivray's recall was prompted by a lack of specimens or letters reaching England. Lack of contact or tangible rewards in the way of specimens would clearly make Lord Derby feel that his investment in his travelling naturalist was not being repaid. In MacGillivray's letter to Gray of 31 July, he informed Gray that he had packed up 'his collection' comprising six or seven boxes of specimens being shipped home on two different vessels. He described these as one box of specimens from Port Essington, one box of Torres Straits skins, insects, etc, one box of bottles, one box of shells and three boxes of corals.[110] In his next letter of 13-18 August he supplied a detailed inventory of the boxes and notes on their contents. Gray's letter recalling MacGillivray was dispatched almost eleven months prior to MacGillivray's letter detailing the dispatch of his collection being sent. Clearly MacGillivray had not up until this point managed to send any significant amount of material back to England much to Gray and Lord Derby's disappointment. It was for this mistake for which MacGillivray was now being made to pay.[111]

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[108] *Ibid*

[109] MacGillivray to Gray, 17 December 1845, British Museum (Natural History). Dept. of Zoology, microform, Foreign letters, M2603, 226.

[110] MacGillivray to Gray, 31 July 1845 (continued from 30 June), British Museum (Natural History). Dept. of Zoology, microform, Foreign letters, M2603, 222-225.

[111] There are 234 bird and thirteen mammal specimens collected by MacGillivray in the Derby Collection in the Liverpool Museum, all of them with collecting dates between 1844 and 1846, again an indication that his earlier specimens were lost; he had also collected plants, invertebrates, and fishes. His fish collection was presented to the British Museum by the Earl of Derby in 1847.

A series of letters from Gray to Derby communicate his misgivings about MacGillivray's performance and indicate the Earl's increasing frustration with his travelling naturalist. Despite initially professing confidence in MacGillivray's abilities Gray's tone gradually changes as communications from MacGillivray obviously become fewer and further between. For his biographer the real mystery in this matter is why MacGillivray did not address any correspondence to his patron the Earl of Derby. Letters were sent to Gray, to his father William and to other friends, such as Adam White and Archibald Hepburn, but nothing appears to have been sent directly to Knowesley. Gray wrote in March 1843:

> I have not had any accounts from Mr. McGillivray [sic] since the Letter I sent you, & you may depend upon me that directly I receive any they shall be immediately transmitted to you....[112]

Matters had become even worse by the time Gray wrote again in July 1844:

> I wish you had recalled MacGillivray for he appears to have completely forgot for what he was sent out. My Nephew in the same ship has sent home a considerable collection to his Mother but desires them to be kept until his return & Mr Jukes the Naturalist has written me to say that several cases are on their way to me but neither mention a word of MacGillivray nor does his family hear anything from him...[113]

And would continue in the same vein with yet another letter:

> My assistant Mr. White has just received the enclosed as I have not heard that you have received any information of the Traveller for some time I thought it might be interesting to you. ... I do not understand why Mr. MacGillivray does not write to you or me and why his father does not send on the letter.[114]

MacGillivray's father, William, was obviously aware that there was some dissatisfaction with his son's performance of his duties and perhaps laid part of the blame on Gray himself. He wrote to his friend James Harley in May 1844:

> Some portion of the anxiety which I felt respecting my absent son has been relieved by us receiving not many weeks ago a hurried letter from him to his mother. But although the information given is otherwise satisfactory, it does not extend to the success of his mission, respecting which there is what seems to me a kind of mystery, for which I cannot find a sufficient reason.[115]

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[112] Gray to Derby, March 1843, *Letters from Knowsley Hall selected and arranged by R. Wagstaffe and G. Rutherford* (Arbroath, Scotland : T. Buncle, 1954-1955). Reprinted from the *North Western Naturalist* for Sept/Dec. 1955, 357-358.

[113] Gray to Derby, July 1844, *Letters from Knowsley*, 373.

[114] Gray to Derby, *Letters from Knowsley*, 382.

[115] W. MacGillivray to Harley, 20 May 1844, Harley Correspondence, Leicester and Rutland Record Office, 13D56/7, f41.

And then tellingly in September 1845, 'I have not heard lately from John, who surely ought to be coming home by this time, to give Gray a thrashing'.[116]

MacGillivray made a powerful enemy in Gray apparently if for no other reason than an inexplicable failure to put pen to paper. Gray's anger is understandable particularly if, as has been suggested, it was Gray that recommended MacGillivray to the Earl of Derby which would have led to a greater feeling of responsibility regarding MacGillivray's poor performance.[117] His bitterness continued for many years. In 1847 Thomas Huxley, then assistant surgeon on board the *Rattlesnake*, wrote to his mother saying:

> By the way tell Dr. Cooke [Huxley's brother in law] with my kindest regards that old Gray is a lying old thief. Many of the things he told me about McGillivray [sic] e.g. his being an ignoramus in natural history etc. etc. having proved to be lies. He is at any rate a very good ornithologist & I can testify is exceedingly zealous in his vocation as a collector. As in these matters Mr Gray's statements are unquestionably false, I must confess I feel really relieved to disbelieve his other assertions.[118]

The recall must have been a bitter blow to MacGillivray and a sad way to end the voyage. The *Fly* sailed from Sydney on 19 December 1845 to return to England. The *Bramble*, under the command of Yule was fitted out and received orders to remain in Australia and to continue the work that she had started with the *Fly*. The Admiralty had already recognised that further work was required in the area and was busy fitting out another ship to survey in many of the same waters in which the *Fly* had spent three years. Blackwood had carried out valuable and pioneering work but it would be this new ship, HMS *Rattlesnake*, under the command of Owen Stanley that would secure a more lasting place in Pacific history.

For MacGillivray the voyage had been a mixed success. It must be assumed that he was indeed vindicated, upon his return, as his subsequent appointments attest to the esteem in which he was then held. The voyage had most certainly had a significant impact on the development of the young man. The relationships with his fellow travellers and people that he met in Australia would profoundly influence the entire shape of his career.

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[116] W. MacGillivray to Harley 10 September 1845, Harley Correspondence, Leicester and Rutland Record Office, 13D56/6, f.5.

[117] Robert Ralph in 'John MacGillivray' states that: 'In correspondence from Archibald Hepburn, a student friend of MacGillivray at Edinburgh to James Harley in Leicester there is a reference suggesting that it was Gray who had recommended MacGillivray to the Earl of Derby. In a letter dated 30 December 1844 Hepburn wrote that MacGillivray was to be recalled by the Earl because in the first two years of the voyage he had not written a single letter or sent one specimen to his patron (presumably Gray) or to his noble employer.'

[118] D.E. Allen, 'Huxley's botanist brother-in-law, *Archives of natural history*, 11 (1983): 192.

Despite later accusations all evidence suggests that MacGillivray got along well with his Captain and companions on board the *Fly*.[119] No evidence exists of any disagreements with those he sailed with, or complaints regarding his behaviour or abilities throughout the voyage. As has already been noted, in April 1845 when MacGillivray discovered the 'beautiful little rat' at Bramble Cay he requested that Gray consider naming it in honour of Captain Blackwood as MacGillivray was 'anxious to express a sense of many obligations by which I am indebted to him'.[120]

Importantly MacGillivray's letters upon his return to England demonstrate that at the conclusion of the voyage he was on good terms with Blackwood, sufficient at least for Blackwood to assist him in securing his next major appointment aboard the *Rattlesnake*. In August 1846 MacGillivray wrote to James Harley informing him that:

> This morning I called upon Capt. Stanley for the last time and was advised of my appointment confirming what I had formerly heard from Capt. Blackwood who has kindly interested himself in the matter and recommended me most strongly to the Admiralty.[121]

MacGillivray's relationship with Jukes and its influence on his thinking is more difficult to assess. However their dealings appear to have been cordial throughout the voyage and the two did remain in contact for a number of years.[122] MacGillivray features so sparingly in the narrative of the *Fly* that his presence on board the vessel seems, at times, to be doubtful. Given that the entire second volume of the *Narrative* is dedicated to Jukes travels in Java during the period of MacGillivray's four month residence at Port Essington in 1844-45, his absence from large portions is understandable.

Despite the sparse references to him in the narrative Jukes and MacGillivray did share a number of experiences during the voyage. Jukes does not mention MacGillivray as a companion on many of his excursions and MacGillivray does not mention Jukes in any of his letters or articles. It may be presumed that MacGillivray took the opportunity to go collecting whenever a place in a boat became available and that these took place with companions other than Jukes.

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[119] See also accusation in another letter from Gray to Derby regarding trouble between MacGillivray and other officers. 'I fear by the account I have just heard that the Youngster MacGillivray [?] the rest have been getting in to trouble with the other officers aboard of the Fly, but I can get no particulars.' *Letters from Knowsley*, 382.

[120] MacGillivray to Gray, 13-18 August 1845, British Museum (Natural History). Dept. of Zoology, microform, Foreign letters, M2603, 222-225.

[121] MacGillivray to Harley, 4 August 1846, Harley Correspondence, Leicester and Rutland Record Office, 13D56/7, f.54.

[122] Jukes mentions a letter he had received from MacGillivray in a letter to Gould in 1850. See Gordon Sauer (ed), *John Gould, the bird man : correspondence, with a chronology of his life and works* edited and compiled by Gordon C. Sauer ; with the assistance of Ann Datta (Mansfield Centre, CT, U.S.A. : Maurizio Martino, c1998-2006) 5 Vols., Vol. 4, 388.

The prevailing interests of the two men would have led them in different directions when opportunities for landings occurred. MacGillivray's primary occupation was that of a collecting zoologist. Jukes interests, although broad, tended to focus on matters geological. In his account of the voyage Melville often refers to MacGillivray as the naturalist[123] and Jukes as the geologist.[124] Despite this difference the two men would certainly have shared an interest in the scientific observation of the flora and fauna observed throughout the voyage. Another significant overlap in their interests included the ethnological opportunities provided by the voyage. Both men were deeply interested in this and made the most of opportunities to observe, interact and record elements, particularly language, of each of the populations they were exposed to. Jukes fascination with and talent for this area of his work is evident throughout his narrative.[125]

Securing the trust and assistance of indigenous populations was a skill MacGillivray demonstrated throughout his entire career. His early experiences on the *Fly* may well have played an important part in developing this particular talent. MacGillivray would have greatly benefitted by being exposed to Juke's methods and manner throughout the voyage as he would have witnessed Juke's interactions with people on mainland Australia as well as throughout the islands of the Torres Strait.

Despite the limited number and scope of MacGillivray's letters and articles from the voyage of the *Fly* they do provide a vivid picture of his collecting activities on this, his first venture out of his home territories. His writings are full of ideas and enthusiasm. His delight in the adventure that he was presented with is obvious as is his appreciation for the future opportunities that it threw in his way. The voyage of the *Fly* would help to establish MacGillivray as an authority on collecting in the Pacific. It confirmed him as a fieldworker of excellence and proved that he was well able to cope with the hardships and privations of shipboard life as well as life in the field. The voyage confirmed his talents as a writer and communicator but perhaps most importantly the voyage opened the doors for MacGillivray's next great adventure, the voyage that would ensure that his name is remembered today. HMS *Fly* helped to produce a young man ready to take on the role of official naturalist to HMS *Rattlesnake* – a role in which MacGillivray would revel. From the perspective of the world of the natural sciences and as a chronicler of adventurous seafaring, it would be the highlight of his life.

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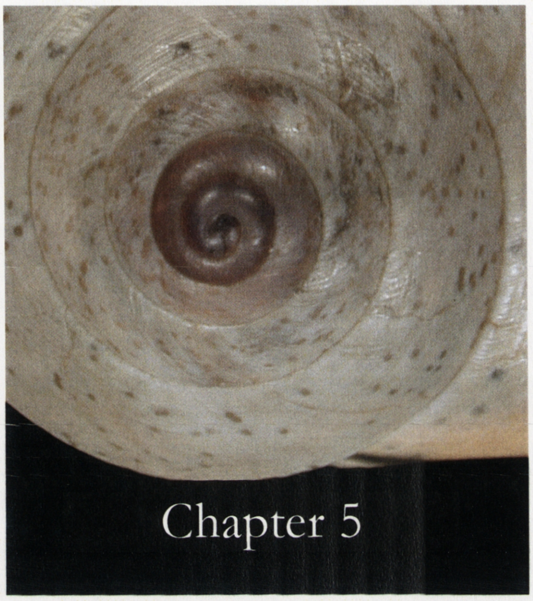
[123] In *Adventures of a griffin* Melville calls MacGillivray 'Jock' when referring to him during the voyage and as 'Mr MacGillivray' when speaking of communications with him following the voyage.

[124] For examples see pages – 18, 116, 121, 133, 137, 179 (MacGillivray) page 98 for Jukes (with an illustration of him 'geologising').

[125] When Alfred Cort Haddon undertook his highly significant work in the Torres Strait in the late 1880s he noted that he had drawn heavily on the observations of Jukes from the *Fly* and from MacGillivray while on board the *Rattlesnake.* He remarked on the accuracy of his distinguished predecessors. Haddon also noted that '…while forty-five years have passed since Jukes visited Erub and the Murray Islands, the geniality of his nature was such that he is still held in remembrance by the natives, and I was astonished to find that the interchange of names between him and a young Erubian named Dudegab was remembered to this day, for when I mentioned Jukes' name, that fact was immediately related to me, and the old anchorage of the "Fly" was pointed out'. Alfred C Haddon, 'The Ethnography of the Western Tribe of the Torres Straits', *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland,* Vol. 19 (1890): 299.



Chapter 5

HMS Rattlesnake
1846 – 1850

A new bowerbird

Two days before we left Cape York I was told that some bowerbirds had been seen in a thicket, or patch of low scrub, half a mile from the beach, and after a long search I found a recently constructed bower, four feet long and eighteen inches high, with some fresh berries lying upon it. The bower was situated near the border of the thicket, the bushes composing which were seldom more than ten feet high, growing in smooth sandy soil without grass.

Next morning I was landed before daylight, and proceeded to the place in company with Paida, taking with us a large board on which to carry off the bower as a specimen. …

While watching in the scrub I caught several glimpses of the *tewinya* (the native name) as it darted through the bushes in the neighbourhood of the bower, announcing its presence by an occasional loud churrrr, and imitating the notes of various other birds, especially the leatherhead. I never before met with a more wary bird, and for a long time it enticed me to follow it to a short distance, then flying off and alighting on the bower, it would deposit a berry or two, run through, and be off again (as the black told me) before I could reach the spot. All this time it was impossible to get a shot. At length, just as my patience was becoming exhausted, I saw the bird enter the bower and disappear, when I fired at random through the twigs, fortunately with effect. So closely had we concealed ourselves latterly, and so silent had we been, that a kangaroo while feeding actually hopped up within fifteen yards, unconscious of our presence until fired at. My bowerbird proved to be a new species, since described by Mr. Gould as Chlamydera cerviniventris, and the bower is exhibited in the British Museum.

John MacGillivray
Narrative Of The Voyage Of H.M.S. Rattlesnake, Vol. 1, 323.

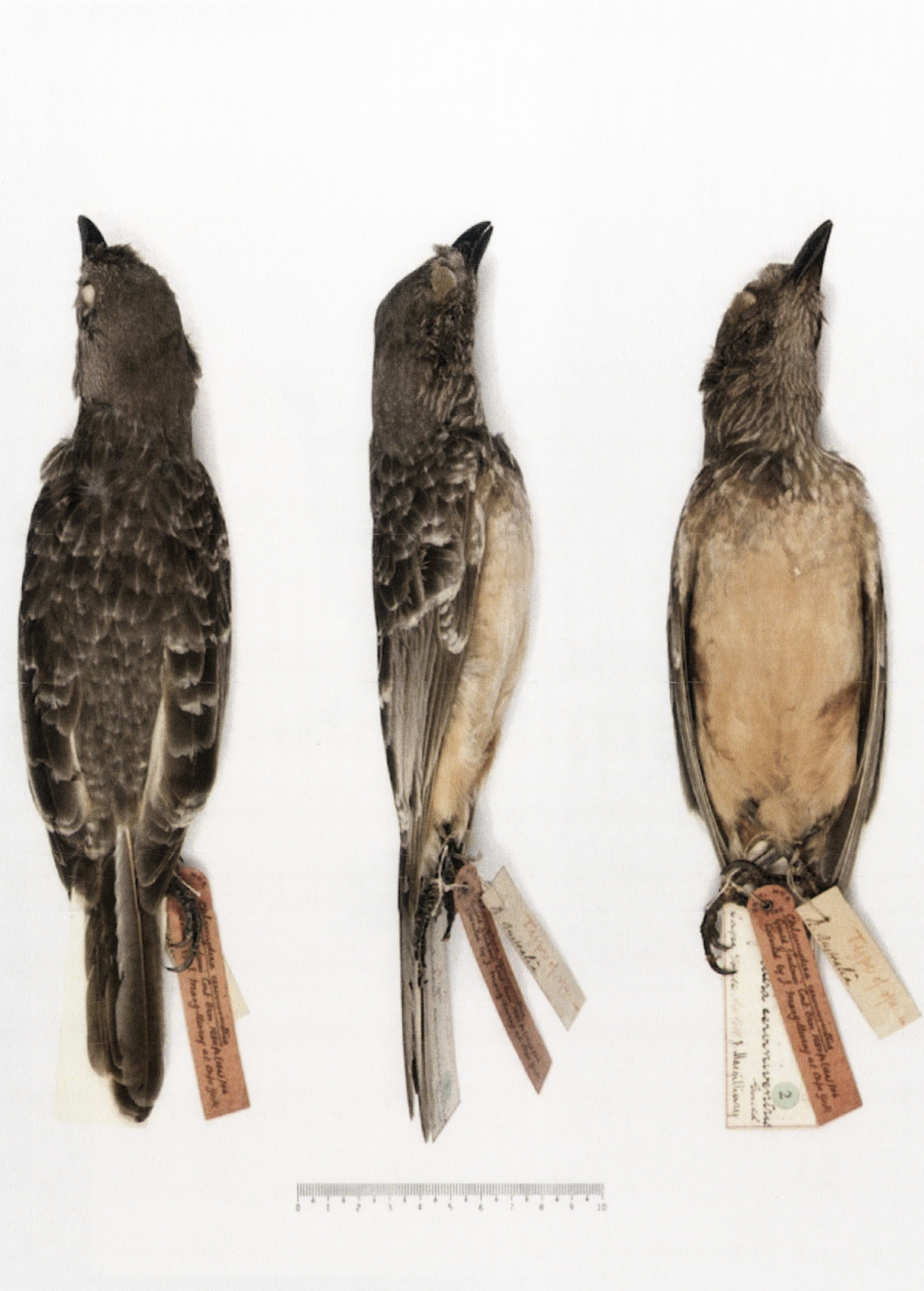


Plate 14: Type specimen, Fawn-breasted Bowerbird (*Clamydera cerviniventris*)
Collected by John MacGillivray at Cape York during the voyage of HMS *Rattlesnake*. Now in the collection of the Natural History Museum, London. Accession number 1851.1.11.11.
(Natural History Museum, London)

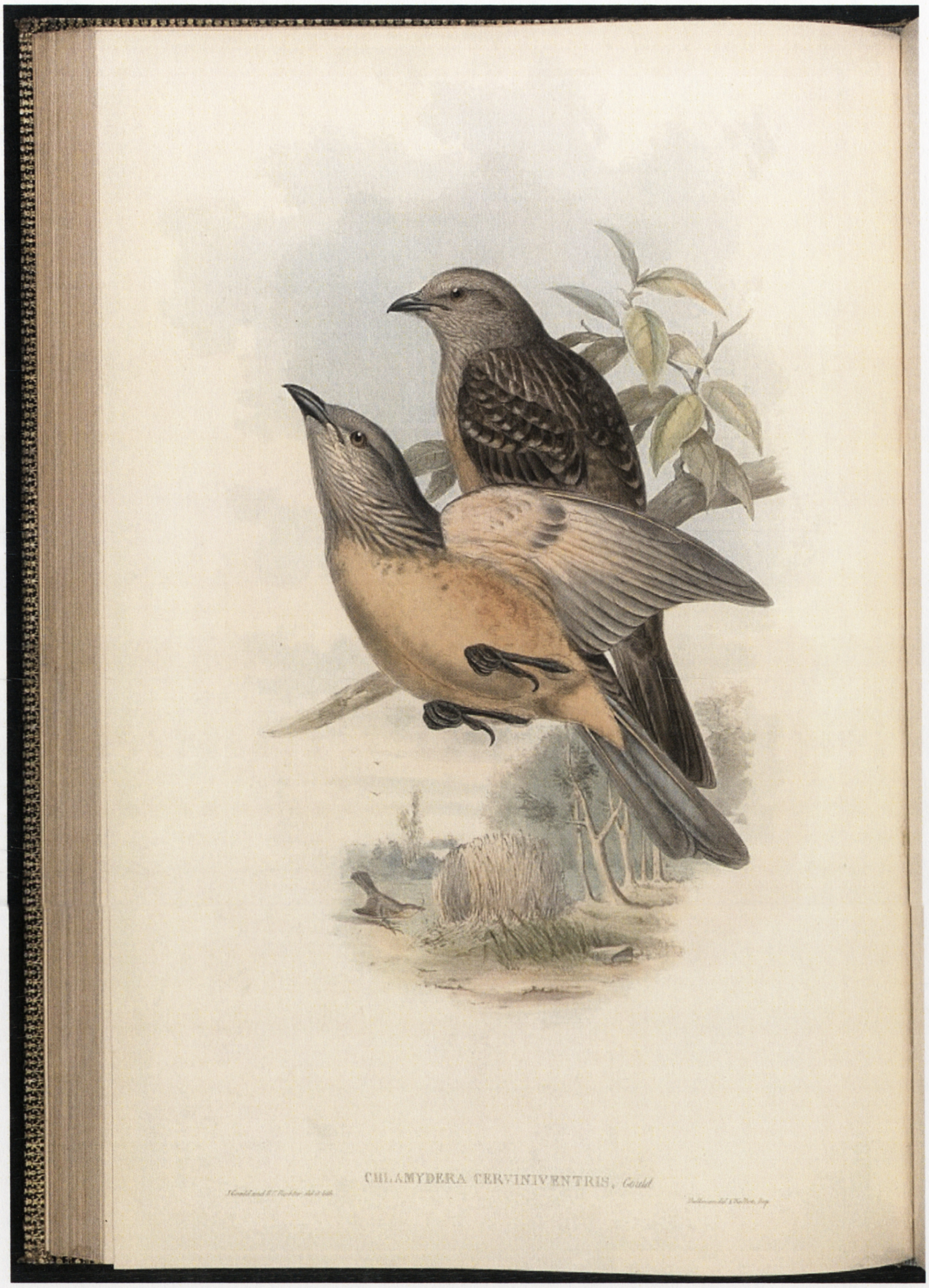

CHLAMYDERA CERVINIVENTRIS, Gould
J Gould and H C Richter del et lith

Plate 15: Fawn-breasted Bowerbird (*Clamydera cerviniventris*)
Plate from Gould's *The Birds of Australia. Supplement*
(London : Printed by Richard and John E. Taylor, 1848. Supplement published 1869.
National Library of Australia)

In the storerooms of the British Museum of Natural History a small bird lies in a drawer. Its delicate feathers are perfectly preserved. Its colours are still rich and warm. Wrapped around its feet are tags that detail its life and death. This bird is the type specimen of the Fawn-breasted Bowerbird, (*Chlamydera cerviniventris*). It was collected by John MacGillivray on the voyage of the *Rattlesnake*. Its capture was detailed within the narrative of the voyage. It was described by Gould in 1850 and appeared in Gould's Supplement to *The Birds of Australia* in 1869. The capture, description and depiction of this small bird opens a window onto the official world of natural history collecting in which MacGillivray was enmeshed and within which he saw for himself a future of prosperity and prestige. The voyage of the *Rattlesnake* would mark the high point of his career within these systems. His skill as a collector and his talents as a writer came together to create a vivid picture of the life and experiences of a collecting naturalist. The vast collections and remarkable 'novelties' that fell victim to his gun and net are still treasured items within museum collections. Each specimen, still remarkably preserved is testament to his proficiency. These specimens are as evocative as a page written in MacGillivray's own hand. Each bears the traces of him as he worked carefully – stitching, drying, stretching, padding - to ensure that they would survive their journey back across the ocean and into their new environment.

When MacGillivray secured his position on board HMS *Rattlesnake* he was on top of the world. His apprenticeship on board HMS *Fly* was complete and he was ready to make his mark on the world. He wrote excitedly to family friend, James Harley, detailing his new appointment and the advantages of his situation embarking upon this new voyage:

> I am booked greatly to my delight for another 4 1/2 years cruise to the Eastern seas. I go out now under very different auspices. The ship is much larger being one of the 28 gun frigates. I shall have a large cabin – in fact the largest on the lower deck – with plenty of room for specimens - a table in the chart room for writing or skinning at – 2 assistants, and a botanical collector (a kind of gardener) under me – added to which the Capt. (son of the Bishop of Norwich who by the way was very kind to me) is fond of natural history and assured me that he would do his utmost towards affording facilities for landing etc which I am assured he will act up to.[1]

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[1] MacGillivray to Harley, 4 August 1846, Harley Correspondence, Leicester and Rutland Record Office, 13D56/7, f.54.

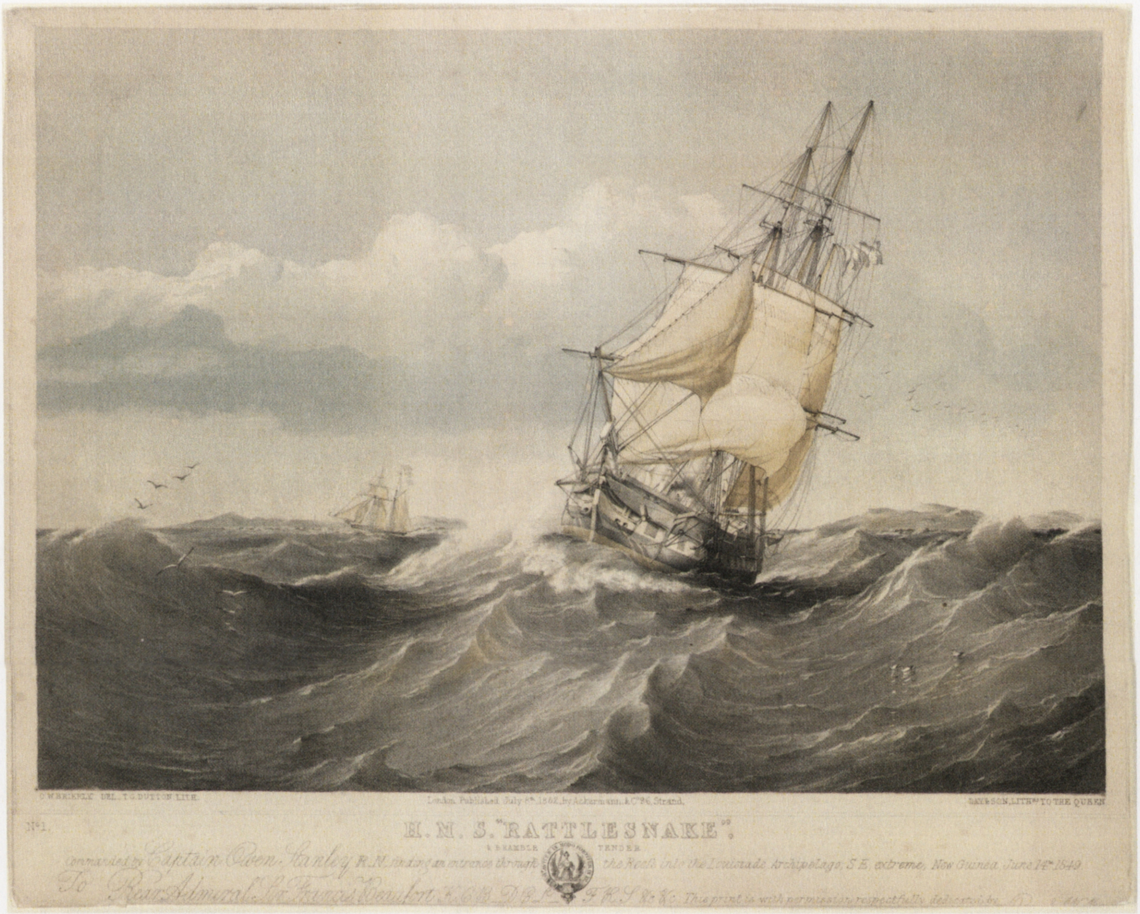
O W BRIERLY DEL. T.G. DUTTON LITH.
London. Published July 8th 1862, by Ackermann & Co 96, Strand.
DAY & SON, LITHrs TO THE QUEEN
No 1.
H. M. S. "RATTLESNAKE".
& BRAMBLE TENDER
commanded by Captain Owen Stanley R.N. finding an entrance through the Reefs into the Louisiade Archipelago, S.E. extreme, New Guinea June 14th 1849.
To Rear Admiral Sir Francis Beaufort K.C.B. D.C.L. F.R.S. &c &c. This print is with permission respectfully dedicated by

Plate 16: 'The *Rattlesnake* and *Bramble* finding an entrance through the reefs into the Louisiade Archipelago, 14 June 1849.'
(Oswald Brierly, lithograph from watercolour. National Library of Australia)

The voyage of the *Rattlesnake* has received considerable attention from a range of scholars. Its significance to Australian surveying and exploration has been thoroughly analysed elsewhere. In particular Jordan Goodman's *The Rattlesnake* documents the voyage in meticulous detail – relying heavily on MacGillivray's work to do so.[2] Iain McCalman's *Darwin's Armada* skilfully charts the significance of the voyage in terms of the development of Thomas Huxley's ideas, character and career as well as the bond that the voyage formed between Huxley and his scientific colleagues such as Joseph Dalton Hooker and Charles Darwin.[3] The aim of this chapter is not, therefore, to chart the progress or significance of the voyage but, as with the voyage of HMS *Fly* in the previous chapter, to examine the way in which this voyage helped to shape MacGillivray's character and career and the way in which it would influence his future prospects. There is no doubt that the voyage altered his life forever. Within the space of five years he would visit the richest collecting grounds of his career, he would work alongside a man who would one day become one of the greatest biologists of all time, he would find love, become a father and publish his most significant work, the *Narrative of the Voyage of H.M.S. Rattlesnake.*[4]

Rather than a chronological examination of the voyage itself, its significance to MacGillivray's life is best obtained through a comparison of the approaches, experiences, methods, work and characters of the young naturalist, MacGillivray, and the young Assistant Surgeon on board the *Rattlesnake*, Thomas Henry Huxley. Both men entered into the voyage with the hopes that it would make their careers. Both were transformed by the experience. Their opinions and experiences repeatedly coalesced and diverged throughout the voyage, their characters, backgrounds, ambitions and expectations shaping their responses to the situations they encountered. The voyage of the *Rattlesnake* was, for these two young men, a brief meeting point on the tangential paths of their lives. The story of science on the *Rattlesnake* as it was approached and practiced by these two young men is illustrative of the state of mid-Victorian science and collecting and foreshadows the changes that were approaching in regards to the transition towards scientific professionalism, which Huxley is so often used to personify.

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[2] Jordan Goodman, *The Rattlesnake: A Voyage of Discovery to the Coral Sea* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005).
[3] Iain McCalman, *Darwin's Armada: How four voyagers to Australasia won the battle for evolution and changed the world* (Camberwell, Vic: Viking, 2009).
[4] John MacGillivray, *Narrative of the Voyage of H.M.S. Rattlesnake, Commanded by the late Captain Owen Stanley, R.N., F.R.S. During the years 1846-1850. Including Discoveries and Surveys in New Guinea, The Louisiade Archipelago* (London: T&W Boone, 1852).

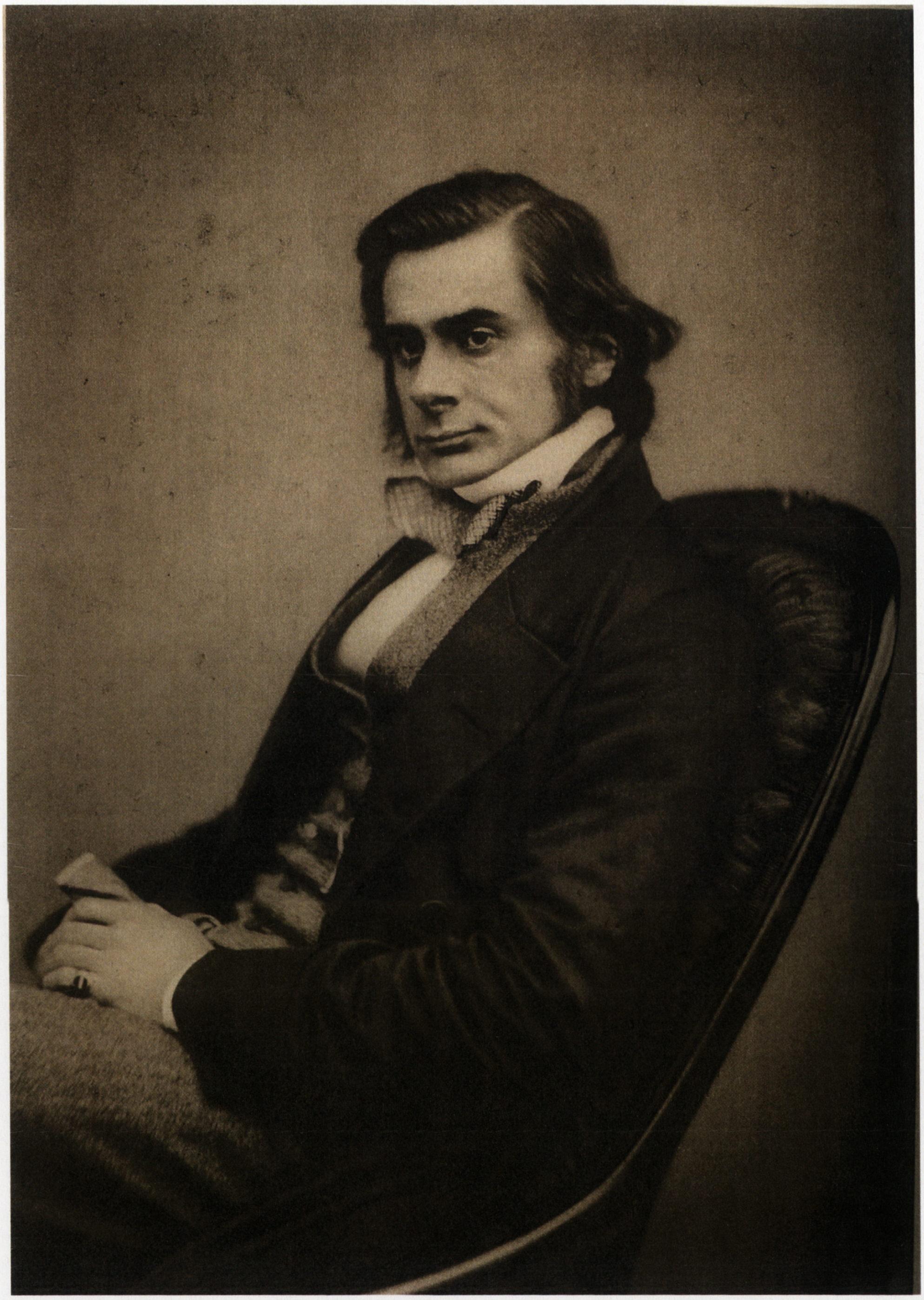

Plate 17: Thomas Huxley, 1857

The examination of the experiences of MacGillivray and Huxley on board the *Rattlesnake* centres on their relationship with each other, the work they conducted throughout the voyage and their response to the physical hardships of shipboard life. It will also explore their experiences of finding love while in Sydney, the contacts they made and exploited through these years and the impact of the voyage on their lives immediately following their arrival back in England.

For MacGillivray the voyage of the *Rattlesnake* would mark the high point of his career. He was twenty-five years old and about to embark on a voyage that held the attention of the key scientific thinkers in Britain. With significant experience in the same region already under his belt, he was aware of the perils and opportunities that this new voyage would present. He was, according to Gould, 'determined to do wonders in the way of Nat. Hist.'[5] Huxley set out with similar ambition but without many of MacGillivray's advantages. He was 21 years old, with no family history in the natural sciences, no experience of travel, poor - but also brilliant and determined. While the ship was still in Plymouth Sound, Huxley, already thinking strategically, set out in his diary a statement of his scientific aims 'so as to turn to the utmost advantage the opportunities this expedition will afford me'.[6]

The two young men counted themselves extremely fortunate to have secured their positions on board this exciting venture. MacGillivray's appointment to the *Rattlesnake* was a combination of good fortune and good timing. MacGillivray was still travelling home on the *Fly* when the *Rattlesnake* began fitting out and her Captain, Owen Stanley, was busy choosing her officers. Filling the position of naturalist was not an easy decision. Sir William Hooker interested himself in the matter and suggested to Francis Beaufort that Ernst Dieffenbach should be appointed. Stanley was adamant that he would not have him on board. In a telling comment made to his sister Mary, Stanley stated that he 'would much sooner have a person of a lower status in life who would not mind being told what to do'.[7] Hooker's son Joseph was also suggested for the post but had decided instead to travel to India. Berthold Seemann was also suggested by Hooker but was then appointed to HMS *Herald*, which was, at the time, on a cruise in the Pacific. It was not until June 1846 that Stanley chanced to meet Captain Blackwood travelling by train between Plymouth and

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[5] Gould to Bennett, 15 December 1846 in Gordon Sauer (ed), *John Gould, the bird man : correspondence, with a chronology of his life and works* edited and compiled by Gordon C. Sauer ; with the assistance of Ann Datta (Mansfield Centre, CT, U.S.A. : Maurizio Martino, c1998-2006) 5 Vols., Vol. 4, 102.

[6] T.H. Huxley, *T.H. Huxley's diary of the voyage of H.M.S. Rattlesnake* ed. from unpublished ms. by Julian Huxley (Garden City, N.Y. : Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1936), 15.

[7] Goodman, *The Rattlesnake*, 31.

Portsmouth in the company of MacGillivray that MacGillivray's name was put forward as a suggestion. Blackwood and MacGillivray had only been back in England a matter of weeks before this encounter - MacGillivray could not have been more pleased, especially given his difficulties with John E Gray of the British Museum and the Earl of Derby over his performance on the *Fly*. MacGillivray's position on the new voyage however, took months to confirm. Although Stanley advised him in August that the matter was settled, Beaufort did not officially advise him that he was acceptable until October.[8] His salary was agreed at £250 per annum. He arrived ready to depart on 19 November, however numerous delays meant that the ship did not leave until 11 December.

In contrast to MacGillivray's appointment, Huxley's was remarkably smooth. Sir John Richardson, head of the Naval Hospital in Portsmouth, had recommended Huxley for the position of Assistant Surgeon. Stanley requested someone with an interest in science and Richardson, himself a naturalist and polar explorer, quickly nominated Huxley as ideal for the post.[9] Huxley, without MacGillivray's experience, or family background in the natural sciences, relied heavily on the patronage of Richardson. His hard work had had now paid off handsomely.

The brief period of six months in England between the arrival home of the *Fly* and the departure of the *Rattlesnake* were busy ones for MacGillivray. He arrived back on the *Fly* on 19 June 1846 and departed on the Rattlesnake on 11 December. His first task would have been to seek out Gray at the British Museum and, through him, the Earl of Derby in order to defend his actions, reputation and achievements throughout the voyage of the *Fly*. No doubt the collections he brought with him and the boxes that had, by that stage, arrived assisted him in his defence.

Following his chance meeting with Stanley and his official offer of the new position, MacGillivray set about preparing for his next voyage and networking with those of the scientific community who had interested themselves in its outcomes. MacGillivray particularly enjoyed socialising with the ornithologist John Gould and wrote to Harley that he would have been 'very miserable in London waiting anxiously and longing to see my friends and hoping each successive day to bring my affairs to a close, had I not fallen in with Gould with whom I have spent many pleasant hours'.[10] At Gould's residence he met and mixed with other luminaries of the London scientific scene such as Richard Owen, George Robert Waterhouse, Hugh Cuming and Professor Edward Forbes.[11] He attended meetings of the Zoological Society and was delighted to hear Gould describe some of his own discoveries made during the *Fly's* voyage.

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[8] MacGillivray to Harley, 4 August 1846, Harley Correspondence, Leicester and Rutland Record Office, 13D56/7, f.54.

[9] Goodman, *The Rattlesnake*, 25.

MacGillivray was obviously amusing himself in other ways as well. The temptations of London were strong after years of life on board a small ship in the antipodes. On 22 August he wrote again to Harley – this time in quite a different strain. He was now in desperate need of financial assistance. He wrote that he was '...helpless without the means of getting out of my difficulties unless you help me'.[12] He told Harley that he had not heard from his father and would not write to him again as he had disappointed him too often about going home and that the subject had now become a painful issue between them. He also noted that all would be well if only he could see Lord Derby – indicating that the issues regarding his conduct and achievements on the last voyage took some time to resolve. His family in Aberdeen eagerly awaited his arrival home and were bitterly disappointed as he put off his visit week after week. Late in August his father William wrote to Harley complaining that he could not understand what had kept his son in London, especially given that his mother was ill and that they had not heard from him in over a fortnight.[13] It would appear that he did make a short visit to Aberdeen before his departure in December as his father conceded in a later letter that he did at least appear affectionate during his brief visit and was 'remarkably kind to his brothers and sisters'.[14]

Harley came to MacGillivray's financial rescue and was repaid poorly for his trouble. MacGillivray left on board the *Rattlesnake* without making good his debts, a fact that deeply troubled William MacGillivray. Harley wrote to William seeking some kind of explanation for the way in which John had behaved and received this reply:

> Your letter of the 25th communicates information, which, however distressing, does not surprise me. Why the person alluded to should not have written to you and returned the money borrowed, I cannot imagine. He seems to have no idea of the value or true use of

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[10] MacGillivray to Harley, 4 August 1846, Harley Correspondence, Leicester and Rutland Record Office, 13D56/7, f.54.

[11] *Ibid*

[12] MacGillivray to Harley, 22 August 1846, Harley Correspondence, Leicester and Rutland Record Office, 13D56/8, f.12.

[13] W. MacGillivray to Harley, 24 August 1846, Harley Correspondence, Leicester and Rutland Record Office, 13D56/7, f.9.

[14] W. MacGillivray to Harley, 28 December 1846, Harley Correspondence, Leicester and Rutland Record Office, 13D56/7, f.7.

> money, and to have thus run into debt; when I should have thought that his salary of £80 a year would have sufficed to pay at least all his extra expenses. When away, he sent me £25 and £20; of which I have since returned £25 and when he left he borrowed of an insurance company £100, for which I have necessarily become security, and which he said would be quite sufficient to fit him out for his new voyage. Yet he wrote from Plymouth for £15, which I could not get for him, and on my not answering his letter, went off without writing to us, and sent a bill for £4. I cannot account for these things.[15]

This correspondence is the first solid evidence of the serious financial mismanagement that would dog the rest of MacGillivray's career. The costs incurred in fitting him out for the voyage are especially difficult to justify given that MacGillivray had already told Harley that Professor Forbes was putting up the money for his outfit – through the Admiralty[16] and that other individuals such as Gould had also contributed to his expenses.[17] The pattern of debt, financial disgrace and obligation would be one that would grow over succeeding years. No hint of this trouble is however evident in MacGillivray's letters to his scientific colleagues during the voyage. As he set out in December 1846 his entire attention was fixed on making a success of this new opportunity presented to him by the voyage of the *Rattlesnake.*

Owen Stanley's instructions from the Admiralty directed him to continue the work that Captain Blackwood had begun on HMS *Fly* as 'much is still to be done in order to make the approach to the Strait more secure and certain, as well as to afford the choice of another entrance farther to the northward in case of vessels overshooting the latitude of Raine Island by stress of wind, or current…'.[18] The Hydrographer, Rear-Admiral Sir Francis Beaufort provided far more comprehensive instructions which greatly extended the scope of work outlined in the Admiralty orders. These included adding as much detail as possible to the surveys already undertaken of the 'inner route' and undertaking an examination of those parts of the Coral Sea likely to be used by mariners making for the Torres Strait. Beaufort also asked that Stanley explore the northernmost entrance from the Pacific, Bligh's Channel (or entrance), and in doing so connecting the islands with 'a survey of the east coast of New Guinea, as well as with the edge of the Warrior Reef…'[19].

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[15] *Ibid*

[16] MacGillivray to Harley, 4 August 1846, Harley Correspondence, Leicester and Rutland Record Office, 13D56/7, f.54.

[17] Gould purchased a gun for MacGillivray, which he lost while shooting birds from the jolly boat (see illustration). In a letter to Forbes MacGillivray commented that 'My best gun having none of the natatorial properties of the birds it was intended to destroy, went down to the realms of Father Neptune, where I can only hope it may prove useful in developing the "young idea" of the juvenile members of his family'. MacGillivray to Forbes, 14 May 1847, John MacGillivray, *Notebook 1844-1849*, microform - original in private collection, (Hobart: State Library of Tasmania).

[18] MacGillivray, *Narrative*, Vol. 1, 2.

[19] MacGillivray, *Narrative*, Vol. 1, 6-8.

Beaufort added that Stanley would find much to do in the Torres Strait and should also investigate Cape York in order to consider if a suitable site for a station could be found.[20]

Everything augured well for the voyage as the *Rattlesnake* set sail on 11 December 1846. MacGillivray and Huxley were ready for adventure and eager to make their mark on the worlds of science and exploration. The ship was well provided for in terms of officers and guests holding scientific interests. As well as Huxley and MacGillivray the ship's surgeon, John Thomson had an interest in botany and James Fowler Wilcox joined the ship as a private collector for Owen Stanley's father, the Bishop of Norwich. The Reverend Robert King, second son of Philip Parker King, came on board as a passenger.[21] King had a strong interest in science generally and in particular shared Huxley's excitement in the produce of the towing net.

At the outset of the voyage MacGillivray and Huxley enjoyed each other's company. They would have spent some time weighing each other up. Huxley had already heard of MacGillivray. Gray had been busy spreading tales about London of his incompetence and ignorance and word had reached Huxley of this through his brother in law John Cooke. Huxley wrote to his mother defending MacGillivray's reputation. MacGillivray had certainly made a favourable impression on Huxley early on in the voyage.[22]

Huxley also made a positive impression on MacGillivray. MacGillivray commented on numerous occasions in his letters home on Huxley's dedication and industry. While in Rio de Janeiro the pair went dredging for marine specimens. The ship had not been supplied with a sieve and so they were forced to improvise. In a letter to Edward Forbes, MacGillivray described how they were forced to fashion one of their own design using a machine, intended for washing rice, and wire gauze. In the same letter MacGillivray praised Huxley's industry and success at dissecting the specimens they collected.[23] During the early stages of the voyage the pair enjoyed pleasures other than collecting. Huxley informed his mother that other interests often subsumed scientific pursuits:

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[20] *Ibid*

[21] Goodman, *The Rattlesnake*, 36.

[22] As mentioned in the previous chapter. Huxley wrote to his mother 'By the way tell Dr. Cooke (Huxley's brother in law) with my kindest regards that old Gray is a lying old thief. Many of the things he told me about McGillivray [sic] e.g. his being an ignoramus in natural history etc. etc. having proved to be lies. He is at any rate a very good ornithologist & I can testify is exceedingly zealous in his vocation as a collector. As in these matters Mr Gray's statements are unquestionably false, I must confess I feel really relieved to disbelieve his other assertions.' D.E. Allen, 'Huxley's botanist brother-in-law', *Archives of natural history*, 11 (1983): 192.

[23] MacGillivray to Forbes, 14 May 1847, John MacGillivray, *Notebook 1844-1849*, microform - original in private collection, (Hobart: State Library of Tasmania).

> …singular to relate, our investigations always took in the end a chemical turn, to wit, the examination of the nature and properties of a complex liquid called Sherry Cobbler. Oh Rio, thou Sodom-and-Gomorrah in one, town of stinks and ghastliness, thou shalt be saved not because of one just man, but because of the excellence of the iced drink of the man. We have a tradition, McG. and I, that one evening we consumed nine pigeons and eighteen Sherry Cobblers! Can these things be?[24]

This camaraderie continued when the pair reached Hobart when Huxley recorded that:

> I got ashore in the jolly-boat before the ship came up to her anchorage, and having done what business I had to do, got before a huge fire in the Ship Inn with McGillivray [sic] and there stuck, imbibing considerable quantities of toddy, until ten or eleven o'clock. We were all invited to a ball that evening but it had no charms for me compared with that splendid wood fire.[25]

Not a shred of the warmth and companionship shared by the two men at the outset of the voyage would remain by its conclusion.

The first fruits of the voyage (apart from of the cobbler variety) came early for both Huxley and MacGillivray and clearly demonstrate the differences that would separate the two men – both on the voyage and throughout their careers. The significance of Huxley's scientific activities while on the *Rattlesnake* has received considerable attention from his numerous biographers.[26] Huxley sent his first scientific paper, 'On the Anatomy and Physiology of Physalia and its Place in the System of Animals', from Simonstown in April 1847. MacGillivray - surely learning from past mistakes – sent back his first case of specimens from the *Rattlesnake*'s next port of call, Mauritius, a month later in May. While both Huxley and MacGillivray were quickly demonstrating their productivity, the difference was that whereas Huxley sent back his name and ideas for promotion back in the centre of scientific activity, MacGillivray sent back fodder to promote the names and fuel the ideas of others. This was the key pattern that would define both men's careers.

While in Australia the *Rattlesnake* used Sydney as its base. From here Stanley undertook three major cruises. The first cruise north from 11 October 1847 until 14 January 1848 reached Cape Upstart but was cut short due to lack of water. The second cruise was a major undertaking as Stanley also took responsibility for the landing of the ill-fated exploration party led by Edward Kennedy. This cruise departed from Sydney on 29 April 1848 and returned to Sydney on 24 January 1849 having travelled up to Cape York and Port Essington. The third and last cruise during which the ship travelled to the Louisiade Archipelago, the Torres Strait and New Guinea, took place from 8 May 1849 until 5 February 1850.

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[24] Huxley, *Diary*, 28. Note - Sherry Cobbler is a cocktail consisting of sherry, sugar, crushed ice and fruit – generally citrus.

[25] Huxley, *Diary*, 49.

[26] See McCalman, *Darwin's Armada*, Mario Di Gregorio, *T.H. Huxley's Place in Natural Science* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984). Adrian Desmond, *Huxley : The Devil's Disciple* (London, New York: M. Joseph; Viking Penguin, 1994). Paul White, *Thomas Huxley : Making The "Man of Science"*, Cambridge Science Biographies (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Huxley determined early on in the voyage that his scientific investigations should centre on questions of comparative anatomy of different pelagic organisms. Throughout the voyage he produced papers on *Physalia*, *Diphyes*, *Medusa* and *Trigonia.* [27] These floating sea organisms were caught in tow-nets dragged in the wake of the ship.[28] Specimens had to be examined quickly before they decayed – their perishable nature being both a curse and a blessing. It meant that Huxley was able to examine creatures unavailable to those not placed in his position on board a ship but it meant that work had to proceed quickly before the stinking material had to be discarded.

Huxley's excitement at the work is obvious in a letter to his sister from Sydney in 1847 in which he wrote that he had written:

> ...an account of Physalia, or Portuguese man-of-war as it is called, an animal whose structure and affinities had never been properly worked out. The careful investigation I made gave rise to several new ideas covering the whole class of animals to which this creature belongs, and these ideas I have had the good fortune to have had many opportunities of working out in the course of our subsequent wanderings, so that I am provided with materials for a second paper far more considerable in extent, and embracing an altogether wider field. ... [29]

This second paper would become his Diphydae paper 'On the anatomy of the Diphyes and on the unity of composition of the Diphydae and Physophoridae', again transmitted to the Bishop, arriving on 15 May 1848.[30]

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[27] Trigonia – Forbes published the results of his work on the anatomy of Trigonia in 1849. Goodman, *The Rattlesnake*, 121.

[28] In his *Narrative* MacGillivray describes the towing-net as: a bag of "bunting" (used for flags,) two feet deep, the mouth of which is sewn round a wooden hoop fourteen inches in diameter; three pieces of cord, a foot and a half long, are secured to the hoop at equal intervals and have their ends tied together. When in use the net is towed astern, clear of the ship's wake, by a stout cord secured to one of the quarter-boats or held in the hand, The scope of line required is regulated by the speed of the vessel at the time, and the amount of strain caused by the partially submerged net. MacGillivray, *Narrative*, Vol.1, 27.

[29] *Life and letters of Thomas Henry Huxley* by his son, Leonard Huxley (London : Macmillan, 1900), 2 Vols., Vol. 1, 33.

[30] Goodman, *The Rattlesnake*, 112 and 120. First part of paper communicated on 16 January 1849 and continued in three instalments until final section read on 5 February 1850.

In the same letter to his sister he continued that he hoped that a third and even larger paper would be completed after the first two for which they would have provided the steps. He proudly announced that:

> If my present anticipations turn out correct, this paper will achieve one of the great ends of Zoology and Anatomy, viz. the reduction of two or three apparently widely separated and incongruous groups into modifications of the single type, every step of the reasoning being based on anatomical facts.[31]

Huxley's largest and most influential paper was written on the *Medusae*. This was completed by 21 March 1848 while the *Rattlesnake* was engaged inspecting lighthouses at the request of the Colonial office in the area of Bass Strait. Stanley sent it to Beaufort on 28 April 1848. It reached the Bishop at the end of September and had its reading at the Royal Society in June 1849.[32]

There can be no doubting MacGillivray's industry and zeal throughout the voyage of the *Rattlesnake*. The collections he amassed were impressive – not simply in scale and range but also in terms of the 'novelties' he provided. The years on board the Rattlesnake were undoubtedly MacGillivray's most productive and significant as a collector.[33] Stanley was full of praise for MacGillivray's work and early in the voyage agreed to allocate him an extra cabin in which to keep his ever-growing collection.[34] MacGillivray's letters during the voyage to Edward Forbes, John Gould, Sir William Hooker, Joseph Hooker and Adam White are those of a man completely absorbed in his work, excited by his finds and enthusiastic about his activities. He was a competent professional who was clearly in his element, practising in a part of the world of which he knew more than perhaps any other collector at this time. For the first part of the voyage at least, he had the full support of his Captain and opportunities to land on shore were numerous.

Each new landscape, island or environment was a naturalist's potential goldmine, every individual encountered, a source to be exploited. Each birdcall overhead, insect fluttering by and track underfoot offered possible discoveries.

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[31] *Life and letters of Thomas Henry Huxley*, 33-34.

[32] Goodman, *The Rattlesnake*, 151.

[33] Clemency Thorne Fisher, *The importance of early Victorian natural historians in the discovery and interpretation of the Australian fauna, with special reference to John Gilbert*, PhD Thesis, Liverpool Polytechnic, 1992, 496-505.

[34] Goodman, *The Rattlesnake*, 142. Note - although in his description to James Harley of the improved conditions on board his next voyage, HMS *Herald*, MacGillivray commented that he was never given the extra cabin that was promised to him on board the *Rattlesnake*.

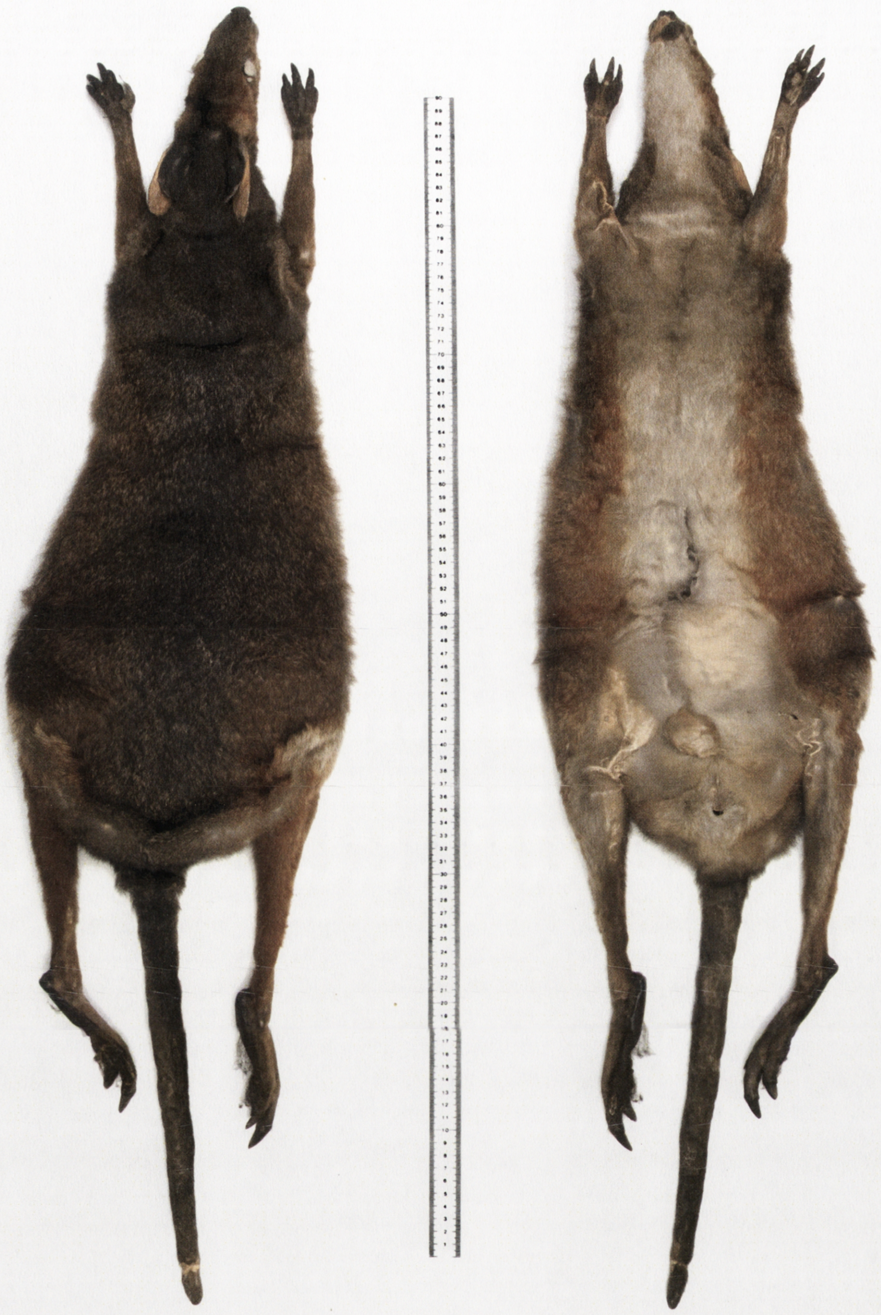

Plate 18: Red-legged Pademelon (*Thylogale stigmatica*)
Type specimen collected by John MacGillivray during the voyage of HMS *Rattlesnake*. Now in the collection of the Natural History Museum, London. Accession number 1860.11.13.1.
(Natural History Museum, London)

…while tacking close in shore, a native dog was seen by Lieut. Simpson, in chace of a small kangaroo, which, on being close pressed, plunged into the water and swam out to sea, when it was picked up by the boat, leaving its pursuer standing on a rock gazing wistfully at its intended prey, until a musket ball, which went very near its mark, sent it off at a trot. The kangaroo lived on board for a few days, and proved to constitute quite a new kind, closely allied to *Halmaturus thetidis*.

John MacGillivray
Narrative Of The Voyage Of H.M.S. Rattlesnake, Vol. 1, 92-93.

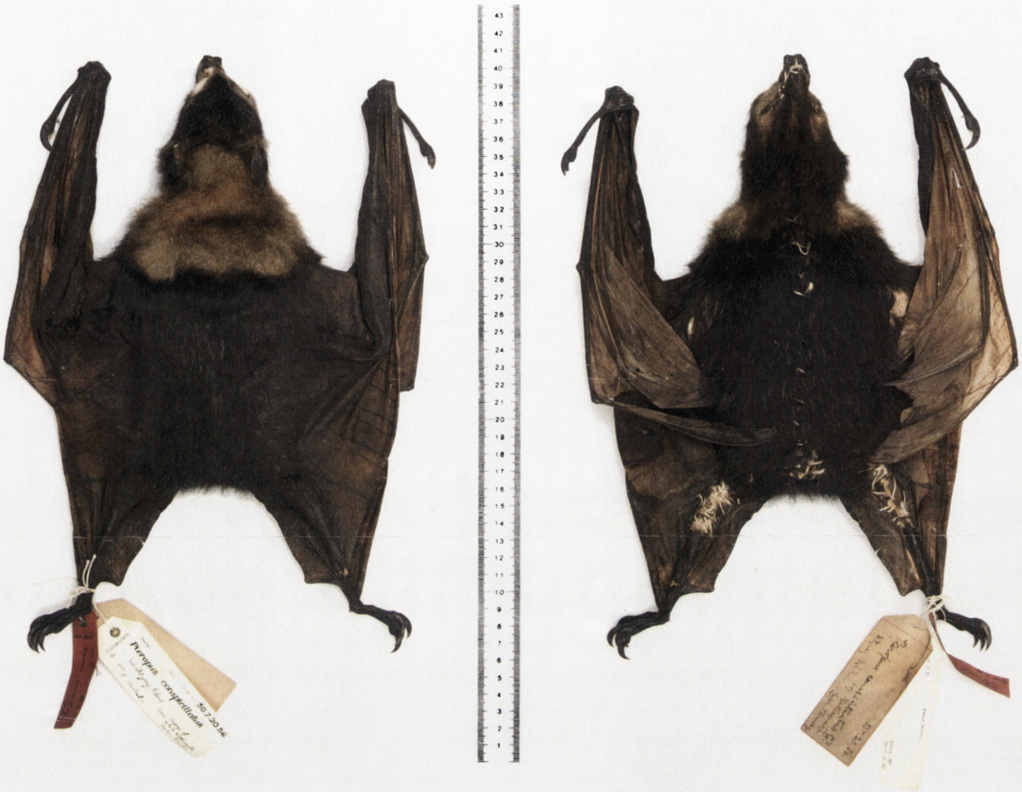

Plate 19: Spectacled Flying Fox (*Pteropus conspicillatus)*
Type specimen collected by John MacGillivray on Fitzroy Island during the voyage of HMS *Rattlesnake*. Now in the collection of the Natural History Museum, London. Accession number 1850.7.20.56.
(Natural History Museum, London)

On the wooded slope of a hill I one day fell in with this bat in prodigious numbers, presenting the appearance, while flying along in the bright sunshine, so unusual in a nocturnal animal, of a large flock of rooks. On close approach a strong musky odour became apparent, and a loud incessant chattering was heard. Many of the branches were bending under their loads of bats, some in a state of inactivity, suspended by their hind claws, others scrambling along among the boughs, and taking to wing when disturbed. In a very short time I procured as many specimens as I wished, three or four at a shot, for they hung in clusters, but, unless killed outright, they remained suspended for some time, - when wounded they are to be handled with difficulty, as they bite severely, and on such occasions their cry reminds one of the squalling of a child.

John MacGillivray
Narrative Of The Voyage Of H.M.S. Rattlesnake, Vol. 1, 96-97.

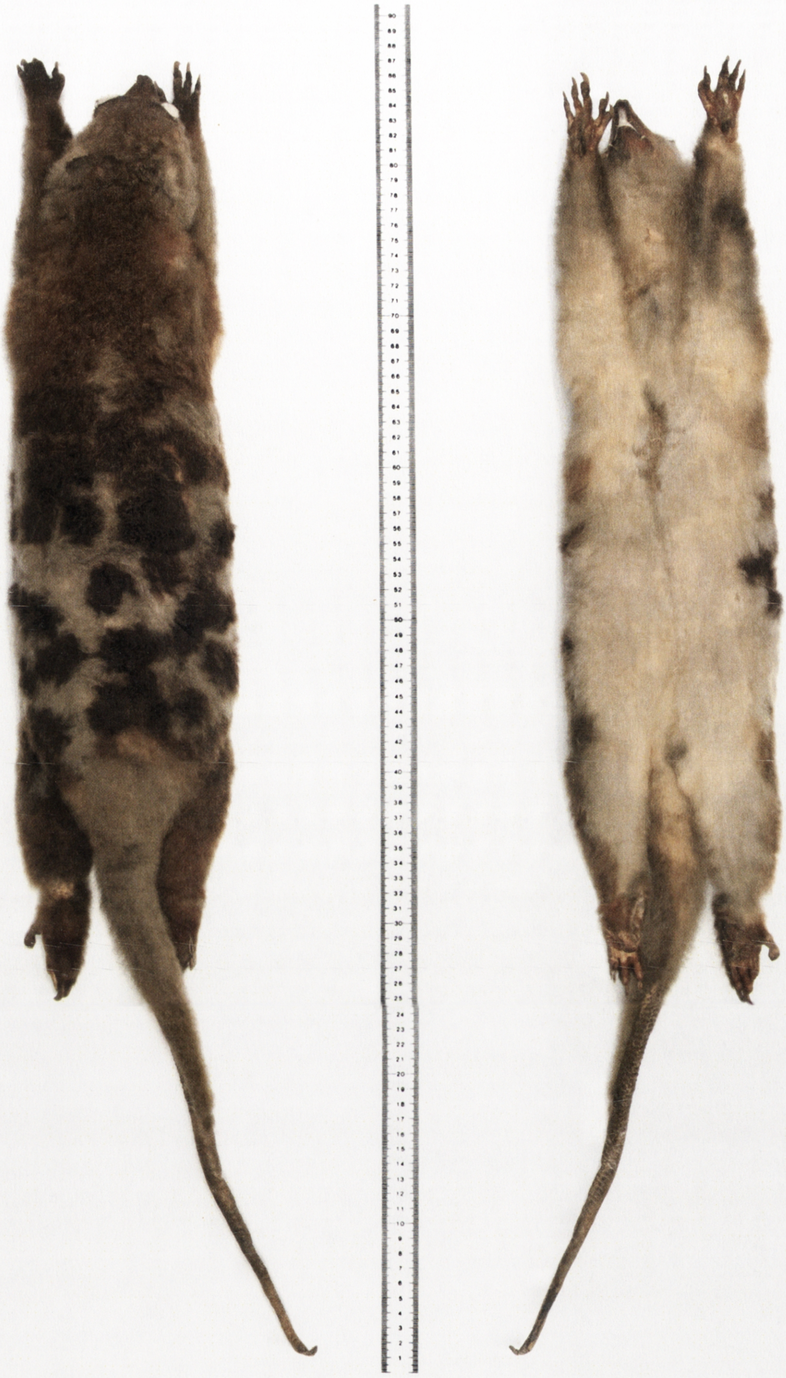

Plate 20: Spotted Cuscus (*Phalanger maculatus nuicaudatus*)
Type specimen collected by John MacGillivray during the voyage of HMS *Rattlesnake*. Now in the collection of the Natural History Museum, London. Accession number 1851.1.11.17.
(Natural History Museum, London)

The natives one day brought down to us a live opossum, quite tame, and very gentle; this turned out to be new, and has since been described by Mr. Gould under the name of *Pseudocheirus nudicaudatus*.

John MacGillivray
Narrative Of The Voyage Of H.M.S. Rattlesnake, Vol. 1, 129.

MacGillivray would have looked with anticipation at every tree, around each bend, hoping, expecting to find something new, something never seen before – a 'novelty' to send back to those eagerly awaiting the results of each foray into the natural world.

Oswald Brierly, friend and associate of Benjamin Boyd, who had joined the ship as an artist in 1848, captured the energy and excitement MacGillivray brought to his work in his journals. Brierly was a talented writer and painter who developed a real interest in ethnology, in particular that of Cape York. He described MacGillivray as 'the indefatigable and talented naturalist of the *Rattlesnake*'.[35] His journals record many excursions undertaken with MacGillivray and provide some of the best descriptions of MacGillivray at work. On Albany Island he wrote, 'When we landed, Mr McGillivray [sic] was soon off, crouching and stealing along like an Indian after some new tern that he saw skimming along the hillside…'.[36] At Cape York his description of MacGillivray paints a vivid picture of the young naturalist at work:

> At the watering place near the beach we again met Mr McGillivray [sic] and his guide and since we parted company he had seen and fired at a wallaby. Scene – day hot, a continual chirr from thousands of [locusts?] in the trees around. A waterhole under the shade of some teatrees near the beach. The naturalist sorting different botanical specimens collected during the morning's excursion, laying and pressing them between sheets of brown paper, a wreath of some kind of creeper round his temples giving him with his head the appearance of a Druidical Priest. The Blacks seemed puzzled at seeing the leaves and flowers of their territory collected and packed up with such care.[37]

The excitement and adventure is conveyed in MacGillivray's own journals and letters home. In these MacGillivray was striving to paint a picture – for himself and for his colleagues in England. His letters, journals and publications were attempts to capture his environment in every detail. His aim, to identify every possible inhabitant of each environment he encountered. He proudly informed the esteemed naturalist Professor Edward Forbes that during one of the cruises of the *Rattlesnake* they had had the opportunity to land on 37 islands along the coast, he remarked - 'several of which, from their small size, or the length of our stay, were thoroughly ransacked'.[38] Despite his choice of words, MacGillivray was far from indiscriminate scientifically. His strength was his ability to be selective: to identify what items would provoke the interest of his colleagues and patrons back in England, and to pursue them with determination.

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[35] David R. Moore, *Islanders and Aborigines at Cape York : an ethnographic reconstruction based on the 1848-1850 'Rattlesnake' journals of O.W. Brierly and information he obtained from Barbara Thompson* (Canberra : Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies 1979), 40.

[36] *Ibid*, 85.

[37] *Ibid*, 51.

[38] MacGillivray to Forbes, 1 February 1849, John MacGillivray, *Notebook 1844-1849*, microform.

MacGillivray's energy and knowledge of plants and animals is impressive. Botany was the area in which he felt least confident but even this branch of collecting he pursued avidly. On the first cruise of the *Rattlesnake* MacGillivray noted the effect that prolonged drought had had upon the vegetation and insect life he had encountered. Nonetheless he made what he described as a 'small' collection of plants of 200 species. In a letter to Adam White he noted that botany did not come strictly within his scope of work but that he felt it better to collect what he could 'leaving to others to sift the chaff from the wheat'.[39] In his letter to Sir William Hooker, Director of the Botanic Gardens at Kew, he wrote that he would not give an account of the last cruise of the *Rattlesnake* as it 'would scarcely interest you unless I could write as a Botanist'.[40]

MacGillivray's industry was not limited to the collection of specimens. Throughout the voyage he also made significant contributions to ethnography collecting word lists whenever the opportunity arose. He made significant additions to the vocabulary he had begun at Port Essington during the voyage of HMS *Fly* bringing the total words up to 500.[41] Within the narrative of the *Rattlesnake* he published a comparative vocabulary of the neighbourhood of Cape York consisting of over 800 words. Another appendix contained a comparative vocabulary of three of the languages of the South-East Coast of New Guinea and the Louisiade Archipelago. These last lists were compiled at three localities – Redscar Bay, Brumer Island and Dufaure Island. The process of collecting words for his Cape York vocabulary demanded 'the exercise of more patience than I thought I possessed'.[42] He described to Forbes the difficulties in his task as he attempted to communicate with individuals who came from at least four different tribes while at the same time dealing with individuals who were visiting from islands in the Torres Strait. Each word obtained was a complex process as he sifted through the various meanings, dialects, inflections and possibilities.

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[39] MacGillivray to White, 22 January 1848, John MacGillivray, *Notebook 1844-1849*, microform.

[40] MacGillivray to W. Hooker, 13 February 1848, John MacGillivray, *Notebook 1844-1849*, microform.

[41] He notes that there was insufficient room to include this vocabulary in the narrative but that it had been lodged at the British Museum – see note regarding this in previous chapter.

[42] MacGillivray to Forbes, 1 February 1849, John MacGillivray, *Notebook 1844-1849*, microform.

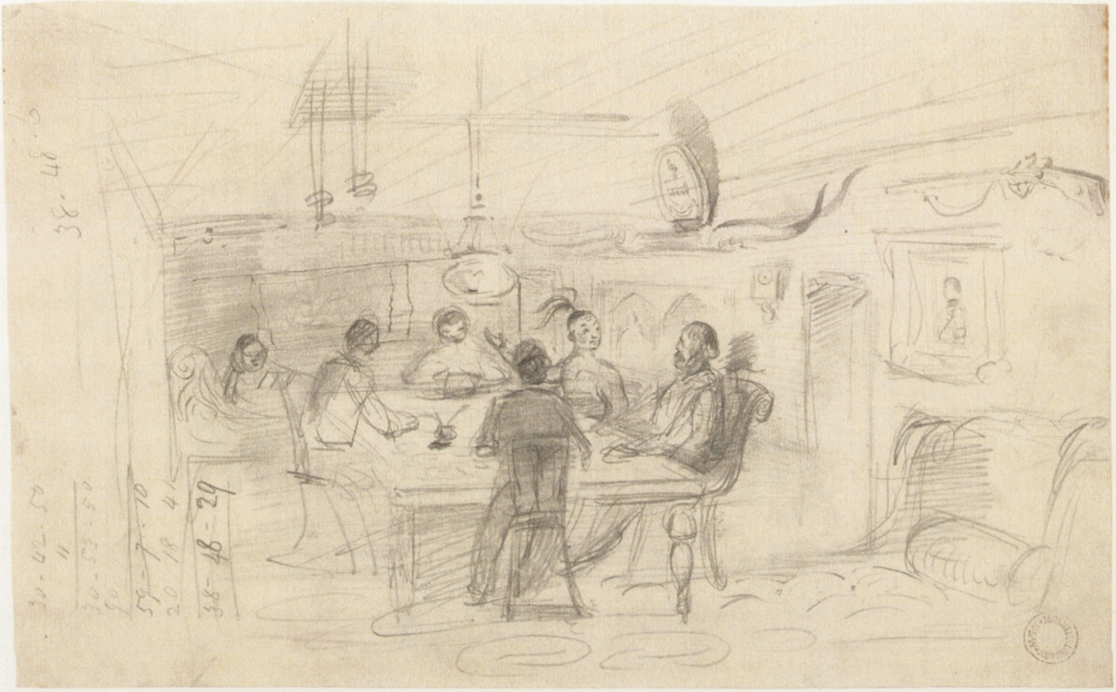

Plate 21: 'Men at table with native onboard Rattlesnake.'
(Oswald Brierly, drawing, in 'New Guinea coast and Cape York area during the voyage of H.M.S. Rattlesnake, ca 1849-1850'. Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales)

Although there is only one acknowledged image of John MacGillivray (that appearing with Beaton's obiturary) this image by Brierly contains a figure which appears to be MacGillivray seated at the right of the picture.

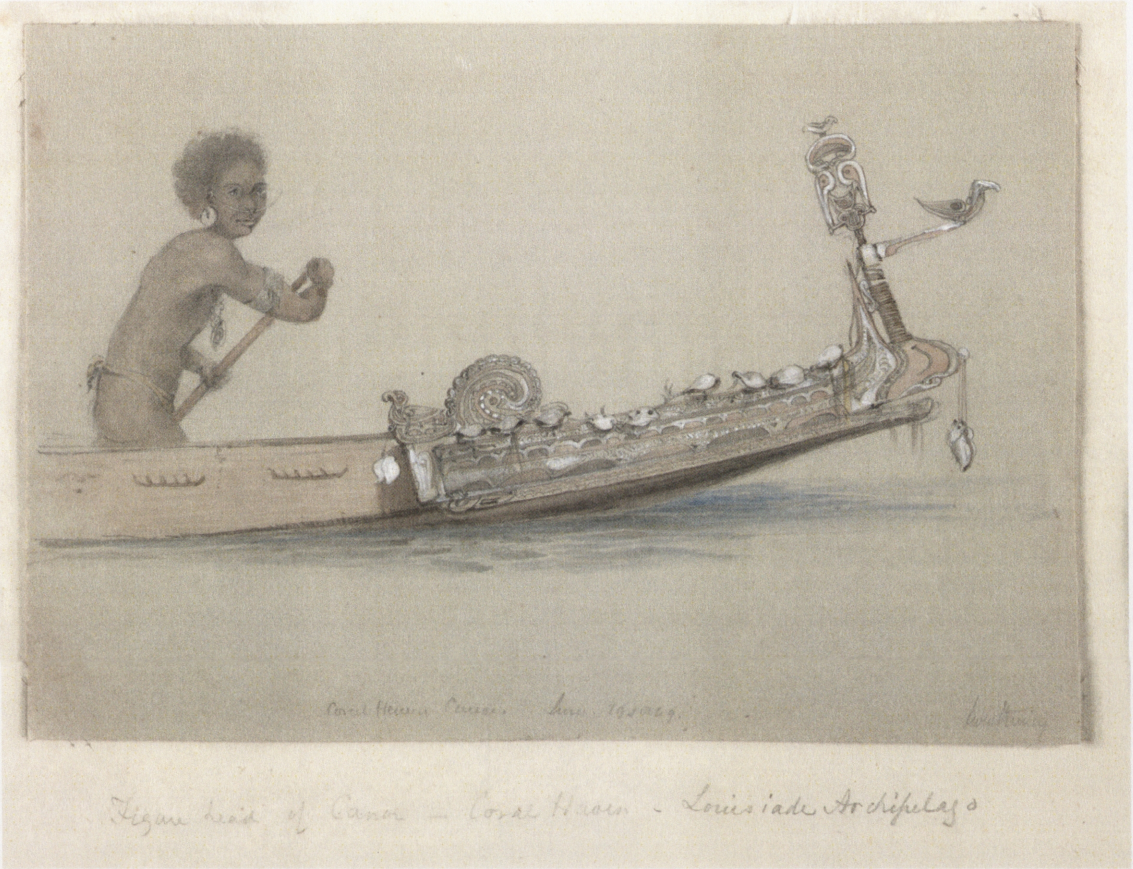
Coral Haven Canoe. June 1849.
Figure head of Canoe – Coral Haven – Louisiade Archipelago

Plate 22: 'Figurehead of a canoe, Coral Haven, Louisiade Archipelago.'
(Owen Stanley, watercolour. Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales)

As he explained to Forbes:

> For example in going over the different parts of the body by pointing to them I came to the shin bone for which at different times and from different individuals I got words which in the course of time I found out to mean respectively the leg, the shin-bone, the skin and bone in general.[43]

Between shooting and skinning birds and animals, collecting and pinning insects, dredging the depths, observing his geological surroundings, establishing communications with 'natives' and collecting plants, MacGillivray was aware that he was not making the transition from collector to scientist, but he laid the blame of this failure upon the heavy workload of an official collector. In a letter to Edward Forbes in 1848 he complained that 'having been unassisted to make collections in all the departments, my duties too often merge into those of a mere collector and preserver of specimens'.[44] This distinction would have been emphasised as he observed Huxley's deliberate, single-minded determination to forge a scientific career through his analysis and description of the *Medusae* family. MacGillivray's comment followed directly on from his praise of Huxley and his belief that his researches would greatly add to the zoological outcomes of the voyage. MacGillivray lacked Huxley's drive, vision, dedication and skill, in this respect. The time taken by fieldwork combined with the required preparation and packing of specimens – a task he complained to JD Hooker took 'all day and half the night'[45] – left little room for the excursions of the mind required for minute description and analysis.

One incident sums up the approaches of the two young men better than any other. On an occasion using the dredge it was pulled across some rocky ground and became filled with a Plumularia 'The stinging properties of the coralline were speedily exhibited on my bare arms to the great satisfaction of Huxley who "had a theory on that subject"..'.[46]

Both men felt, at times, despondent in not hearing how their work was being received back in London. They required some reassurance that their efforts were appreciated, that their ambition to make a name for themselves was being realised. MacGillivray was aware of the significance and importance of the descriptive and analytical work that was conducted on the specimens he was sending. Just as eagerly as those back in England awaited the fruits of his fieldwork, he awaited their opinions in order to confirm that his 'novelties' were in fact such, that the judgement he had shown in acquiring his specimens was correct, and that the risks and deprivations he had endured had been worthwhile. To Forbes he wrote 'You must know how cheering it is to me so far from home as I am to hear of any novelties that may have been transmitted by me'.[47] To Adam White, he wrote of the great encouragement that he gained from the news of the reception of his novelties.[48] Huxley wrote to his mother:

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[43] *Ibid*

[44] E Forbes, 'Letters from J. MacGillivray, Esq., naturalist to H.M Surveying Ship Rattlesnake, Capt. Stanley, R.N.', *The Annals and Magazine of Natural History*, 2 (1848): 31.

[45] MacGillivray to J. Hooker, 27 May 1848, John MacGillivray, *Notebook 1844-1849,* microform.

[46] MacGillivray to Forbes, 1 February 1848, John MacGillivray, *Notebook 1844-1849,* microform.

> Much must depend upon how things go in England. If my various papers meet with any success, I may perhaps be able to leave the service. At present, however, I have not heard a word of anything I have sent. Professor Forbes has, I believe, published some of MacGillivray's letters to him, but he has apparently forgotten to write to MacGillivray himself, or to me.[49]

MacGillivray and Huxley both completed significant work during the voyage of the *Rattlesnake*. MacGillivray was constantly engaged, energetic, excited, and indefatigable. In comparison Huxley's productivity was spasmodic, selective and narrow. Huxley oscillated between mild interest in the people and environments he encountered and feelings of total despair. While Huxley brooded in his cabin suffering from fits of depression while reading Dante and longing for the voyage to be over, MacGillivray trudged through mangroves, waded across coral reefs and observed every aspect of the environment that surrounded him. Of the two men it is however Huxley's work that would be of longer lasting significance.

As well as their work, the voyage of the *Rattlesnake* would permanently alter MacGillivray and Huxley's personal lives. In 1847 while the ship was anchored in Farm Cove in Sydney MacGillivray and Huxley made important discoveries of a different nature. Both young men fell in love. As with their work, the different ways in which the young men dealt with this development reveal fundamental differences in character that would shape the remainder of their lives.

There is very little known of MacGillivray's romantic life. Exactly how, when and where he met a Miss Williamina Paton Gray is not known. It is possible that he had encountered her on his previous visit to Australia. However he makes no mention of the fact in any extant correspondence. Williamina's family had emigrated to Australia in 1835 from Aberdeen when she was ten years old.[50] Her father, Patrick, was a Surgeon who practiced in Sydney until his death in 1851.[51] Williamina had two younger brothers, William and James. When the *Rattlesnake* arrived in Sydney in 1847 she would have been twenty-two years old. It is easy to imagine the romantic figure that MacGillivray would have cut as he arrived in the town. However her thoughts and feelings on this, or any occasion, remain unknown.

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[47] MacGillivray to Forbes, 2 April 1849, John MacGillivray, *Notebook 1844-1849,* microform.
[48] MacGillivray to White, 22 January 1848, John MacGillivray, *Notebook 1844-1849,* microform.
[49] *Life and letters of Thomas Henry Huxley*, 39.

Huxley's romance with Miss Henrietta Heathorn is far better documented. They wrote extensive letters to each other and both kept detailed journals, containing their most intimate thoughts and feelings. The daughter of a brewer, Henrietta lived in New Town with her married half-sister and her family, the Fannings. Henrietta essentially kept the house for the family. Huxley and Henrietta first met in July at one of the many dinners, balls and parties attended by the officers of the *Rattlesnake*. They bettered their acquaintance at a Government Ball later that month and then continued to seek out each other's company at every opportunity. The pair became engaged in October 1847 just before the *Rattlesnake* set forth on its first major cruise.

MacGillivray's one mention of his personal affairs occurred in a letter to John Gould in February 1848 while on the cruise through the Bass Strait. He mentions that he hopes to find some new books on his return to Sydney '(on which occasion by the bye I am engaged to be spliced)'.[52] MacGillivray and Williamina married on the 23 March 1848.[53] Robert Gale, Owen Stanley's steward noted in his diary 'To market early, our Naturalist married ship and tenders decked with garlands'.[54] Huxley attended the wedding along with Joseph Dayman and John Brown. A daughter, Isabella was born almost nine months to the day later – on Christmas Day 1848.[55] MacGillivray wrote of the event to Gould saying:

> On my arrival last time I found the nucleus of a small family in the shape of a daughter born during my absence, & in the course of time became duly initiated into the mysteries of nursing – Indeed so [much crossed out] little inclined to duty [?] did I appear to be to leave Sydney, that our worthy Captain, being afraid that I intended to leave the ship altogether sent me a strong hint to come on board the day previous to

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[50] Information provided by Kay Barnett of Kempsey – a descendant of John MacGillivray.

[51] He is still listed in the Sydney Commercial Directory for 1851 as a surgeon on Princes St.

[52] MacGillivray to Gould, 12 February 1848 in Sauer (ed), *John Gould*, Vol. 4, 209.

[53] John MacGillivray and Williamina Paton Gray, Marriage certificate no.4271 Vol.74b. New South Wales Registrar of Births, Marriages and Deaths. MacGillivray gets the date of the wedding wrong in his natural history notebook listing it as 19 March.

[54] Robert Gale, Journal 1848-1849, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, MSS/76/094.

[55] Isabella G MacGillwray [sic], birth certificate registration no.V184818, 50/1848, New South Wales Registrar of Births, Marriages and Deaths.

> our sailing in the shape of an officer and accept it [illeg.word] – a step as unnecessary as unpleasant…[56]

This is one of the only hints given by MacGillivray of the tensions that were mounting on board the *Rattlesnake* as disputes between Stanley and his officers became more frequent.

Huxley and Henrietta chose a different path. Huxley felt that he could not marry Henrietta until he had sufficient salary to support her and a family, "were she Venus & the Graces rolled in to one' he wrote 'I am not sufficiently fond of love in a cottage, to hurry into marriage upon a hundred & twenty seven pounds ten shillings and no pence per annum.'[57] The decision to wait was not an easy one for either of the young lovers and caused considerable pain – particularly when the *Rattlesnake*'s voyage was over and Huxley sailed back to England leaving his 'Nettie' behind.

> …my eye was now and then turned, armed with the signalman's glass – quiet, quiet – to the other side of the harbour, and there I espied the dear one on the balcony – bare headed too in that hot sun (for which I scolded her in my heart) – with the glass directed towards the old ship. Did she see me? I know not. All I know is that the figure stayed there until we were far down the harbour ….[58]

After his last longing look he retired below to enjoy a glass of champagne to celebrate their eventual reunion. MacGillivray's departure was rather less dignified. He arrived on board that evening hopelessly drunk and was immediately put under arrest.[59] Williamina and his baby daughter boarded at around 2am. In a letter to Huxley shortly after the departure of the *Rattlesnake* Nettie wrote, 'Where is poor Mrs MacGillivray stowed away. I know she got on board at last as also her husband – I fear sure she has got a world of wickedness to encounter.'[60] Unfortunately she was correct. MacGillivray's drinking continued throughout the voyage home. In his diary the midshipman Philip Ruffle Sharpe recorded that:

> At times of an evening, we were often much amused by the soliloquies of our naturalist, McGillivray [sic] whose cabin was just outside the gun room. A clever, talented Scotchman: he used at night to get 'fou' – and it was laughable at such times, to hear him, moralizing as he sat, contemplating himself in the looking-glass: somewhat after this fashion: 'Ah! Jock, you're up to your old tricks again tonight – it will n'a do Jock: you've a wife and a bit bairnie, and you're fou: you must pull up Jock, or what will become of you', and so on.[61]

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[56] MacGillivray to Gould, 12 May 1849 in Sauer (ed), *John Gould*, Vol. 4, 308.

[57] Desmond, *Huxley: the devil's disciple*, 88.

[58] Huxley, *Diary*, 318.

[59] *Ibid*, 319.

[60] Henrietta Heathorn to Thomas Huxley, 1 June 1850, Correspondence of Thomas Huxley and Henrietta Heathorn, 1847-1854, Imperial College of Science and Technology, London.

[61] Philip Ruffle Sharpe, *Jottings of past years book II*, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, MSS/SHP/2.

It would have been difficult for Huxley to endure the voyage home watching MacGillivray behave in such a manner – knowing that he had, for the moment, forgone his own hopes to marry.

Other romances had also blossomed during the *Rattlesnake*'s time in Sydney– James Fowler Wilcox did not return to England. He remained in Sydney, married Miss Mary West and established a business trading in natural history specimens. Charles Yule, commander of the *Rattlesnake*'s tender, the *Bramble,* had also married while in Sydney.[62]

In contrast to those that took an immediate plunge into matrimony Huxley and Henrietta's engagement would last for eight years. It was not until 1854 that Huxley's career appeared secure enough that he began to hope that they could finally marry. Henrietta arrived in England in 1855 and the pair married in July of the same year. Huxley's salary, combined from a range of sources, had reached £800 per annum.[63] It was the same year that Huxley found Williamina MacGillivray and her three young children alone, desperate, poor and starving, four months after MacGillivray's dismissal from HMS *Herald.* By 1855 the contrast between the lives of the two men had reached its ultimate divergence.

The way in which the two young men approached their marriages and the subsequent contrast in their personal affairs makes for an interesting comparison. It could be argued that where Huxley showed control and moderation MacGillivray took a risk and acted rashly. Desmond makes the point that for Huxley – 'the parish-magazine mores were his: no marriage without means'.[64] MacGillivray leapt into marriage and fatherhood on what in England would have been considered a meagre salary and with his employment after the voyage of the *Rattlesnake* still uncertain. While there is truth in this it is also important to note the differences between the two young men. MacGillivray was on his second major voyage. There was no reason for him to suppose that further appointments would not be forthcoming. Two key differences separate the two men in respect to the changes in their personal lives following the voyage. The first was that MacGillivray was still relying on sherry cobblers and their like to an extent that Huxley would never indulge. The second was that, in marrying, MacGillivray effectively lost any chance that he may have had to alter his approach to natural history and collecting – the immediate necessity to earn a living would see him locked into the role of 'a mere collector' for the remainder of his career.

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[62] Goodman, *The Rattlesnake,* 215.
[63] Desmond, *Huxley,* 212.
[64] *Ibid,* 199.

When free from romantic entanglements MacGillivray and Huxley were busy making, or in MacGillivray's case, refreshing, contact with figures in the scientific community of Sydney. MacGillivray's most significant contact was with the natural history collector and dealer Frederick Strange who he had first met during the voyage of the *Fly*. As we have seen, Strange was collecting for various parties including John Gould, who had lost his principle collector, John Gilbert, when Gilbert had been killed in 1845. Strange and MacGillivray went on a number of collecting expeditions together near Sydney and further afield and MacGillivray lodged with Strange for at least some of his time while in the city.[65] Strange wrote to Gould in July 1847:

> At the time I wrote this the Rattlesnake have not arive but it hourley expected and I shall not leave Sydney till she arive as MacGillivray would quite at a lose if I was not at home when he arive.[66]

While the relationship between the two men appears to have been friendly it was not free from jealousy and competitiveness. Strange wrote to Gould in 1847 stating that:

> I am quite sure that I shall be abale [sic] to send Lord Derby more things in one year then Macgillivary [sic] does in his four years than his 300 a year but time will prove this.[67]

Huxley found himself more at home in the gracious house of the Macleay family at Elizabeth Bay. When Huxley's *Medusae* paper was ready in March 1848 it was first perused by William Sharpe Macleay whose "Quinarian" taxonomic system intrigued the young Huxley.[68] He was greatly encouraged by Macleay's support for his work and made the most of the opportunities to meet, mix and get his name known in this sector of Sydney's scientific community.[69] MacGillivray may have profited from his contact in terms of the growth of his collection but Huxley's networking in Sydney would prove to be the more valuable activity.[70]

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[65] Strange to Gould, 17 July 1847, Sauer (ed), *John Gould*, Vol. 4, 155. Strange to Gould 4 August 1847, Sauer (ed), *John Gould*, Vol.4, 164. In this second letter Strange states: 'I shall make up a large collection of Fish by next Ship [.] My reason for not sending them by this Ship is that I am going long with MacGillivray down to Brisbane Water and I hope to add a few more Species by do doing [,] when they will all come home at once.'

[66] Strange to Gould, 24 July 1847, Sauer, *John Gould*, Vol. 4, 161.

[67] Strange to Gould, 14 November 1847, Sauer, *John Gould*, Vol.4, 185.

[68] Desmond, *Huxley*, 89.

[69] On 21 March 1848 in a letter to his sister, Huxley wrote: 'I am getting on capitally at present. Habit, inclination, and now a sense of duty keep me at work, and the nature of our cruise affords me opportunities such as none but a blind man would fail to make use of. I have sent two or three papers home already to be published, which I have great hopes will throw light upon some hitherto obscure branches of natural history, and I have just finished a more important one, which I intend to get read at the Royal Society. The other day I submitted it to William Macleay (the celebrated propounder of the Quinary system), who has a beautiful place near Sydney, and, I hear, "werry much approves of what I have done." All of this goes to the comforting side of the question, and gives me hope of being able to follow out my favourite pursuits in course of time, without hindrance to what is now the main object of my life. I tell Netty to look to being a

The last cruise of the *Rattlesnake* put a temporary hold on all romantic and professional entanglements in which the young men indulged while in Sydney. The *Rattlesnake* left Sydney in May 1849 intending to undertake survey work in the unchartered, unexplored and mysterious area of the Louisiade archipelago and New Guinea. MacGillivray viewed it as the highlight of the voyage. Even Huxley, by this stage weary of the voyage, was aware of the possibilities that this uncharted territory might hold. However relationships on this cruise were stretched to breaking point as Captain Stanley showed less and less inclination to allow landing parties at any location and shied away from contact with any 'natives' encountered. MacGillivray could not contain his disappointment in the opportunities that were lost.[71] Huxley's venom towards his Captain's perceived cowardice knew no bounds.[72]

After a frustrating, tense and difficult cruise the *Rattlesnake* headed back to Sydney. Stanley's health completely broke down and he suffered some kind of collapse. Despite a brief recovery on shore in Sydney Stanley died on board the *Rattlesnake* in the arms of Huxley on 13 March 1850. His death marked the effective end to the voyage.

Preparations were immediately made to return to England with the *Rattlesnake* under the command of Charles Yule. By the time that the *Rattlesnake* arrived back in England in November 1850 the rift between MacGillivray and Huxley was complete. No vestige of the companionship present on the voyage out remained. No warmth shared before blazing fires. No pigeons. No sherry cobblers. The two young men who set out with similar visions of making their names were now heading in vastly different directions. There is no indication of any particular event that marked the disintegration of their friendship. What appears to have taken place is a steady disillusionment on Huxley's part with MacGillivray's behaviour.

"frau Professorin" one oft these odd days, and she has faith, as I believe would have if I told her I was going to be Prime Minister.' *Life and letters of Thomas Henry Huxley*, Vol. 1, 38-39.

[70] On 1 February 1849 in a letter to his mother, Huxley wrote: 'Much must depend upon how things go in England. If my various papers meet with any success, I may perhaps be able to leave the service. At present, however, I have not heard a word of anything I have sent. Professor Forbes has, I believe, published some of MacGillivray's letters to him, but he has apparently forgotten to write to MacGillivray himself, or to me. So I shall certainly send him nothing more, especially as Mr. MacLeay (of this place, and a great man in the naturalist world) has offered to get anything of mine sent to the Zoological Society.' *Life and letters of Thomas Henry Huxley*, Vol. 1, 39.

[71] See John Gould, 'A brief account of the Researches in Natural history of John McGillivray, Esq.' in William Jardine (ed), *Contributions to Ornithology*, (London, Reeve, Benham and Reeve, 1850), 92-105.

[72] See Jordan Goodman, 'Losing it in New Guinea: the voyage of HMS Rattlesnake', *Endeavour*, 29, 2 (June 2005): 64.

Shortly after arriving the MacGillivray's welcomed their second child, another daughter, Marion, into the world. She was born at MacGillivray's father's house in Crown Street, Aberdeen. MacGillivray was given the task of writing the official narrative of the voyage. The Admiralty put him on pay for three months in order to undertake the work and the publishers, T&W Boone, forwarded him £50 to cover his expenses.[73] MacGillivray moved back to London - initially at least - leaving Williamina and his two children in Aberdeen, and commenced his work. Huxley supplied the illustrations for the narrative as the other artist on board, Oswald Brierly, had not yet returned to England. This meant that, despite Huxley's now obvious dislike, contact between the two men continued. In a letter to the *Rattlesnake*'s surgeon John Thompson, Huxley wrote that he saw MacGillivray occasionally 'on *business only*'.[74] Huxley's bitterness towards MacGillivray is clear in another letter to Thompson where he wrote of attending a meeting of the Geographical Society at which MacGillivray read a paper. Huxley wrote:

> I looked on, and laughed. I get asked all sorts of questions about the latter by people, and have to keep my tongue within my teeth as much as possible. He is not the man whose praises one can dilate upon.[75]

MacGillivray's work on the *Narrative* did not go smoothly. He struggled to support his family in England and his debts were rising. Somewhere around April matters became more difficult as Williamina and the children arrived back in London. He was forced to write to Gould seeking a loan. He wrote:

> The unexpected arrival of my family has quite put me out and has obliged me to ask you for this which I dare say you you [sic] will under the circumstances be able to do without inconvenience. ... With my usual bad management I am constantly getting into temporary difficulties but hope to be out of them as soon as I have done with my book and be able to better attend to other matters.[76]

Three more months passed and no book appeared. Huxley's frustration grew and his letters to Thompson became even more scathing. In June 1851 he wrote:

> The voyage of H.M.S. has not yet appeared. I have been so bothered about the book with inquiries about its coming out, that I took the trouble the other day to make inquiries of the fountain-head – the primary mud-volcano himself – about it. He tells me that it is to appear in the middle of July. ... He has been getting into all sorts of

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[73] Goodman, *The Rattlesnake*, 281. Robert Ralph says six months (no reference for this given).
[74] Huxley, *Diary*, 355.
[75] Huxley, *Diary*, 356.
[76] MacGillivray to Gould 1 (?) April 1851, in Sauer (ed), *John Gould*, Vol.4, 513.

> messes, quarrelling with his publisher, dawdling over his work, until he has got into difficulties. I am told that old Suckling beat up his quarters lately and was so struck with the condition of distress in which he found him as to leave £5 for him.[77]

By the end of July Huxley had lost all patience. He wrote to Thomspon:

> MacGillivray has deceived every one, as might have been expected – Boone complains bitterly to me about him – and with great justice. Boone has advanced him £50 on the book, and can neither get that repaid nor can get the conclusion of the book out of him. I have done all I can, but McGillivray has lied to me so thoroughly, that I am altogether disgusted. ...I have not now the slightest faith that the book will come out at all – and if it does the name of that disreputable scamp will be enough to damn it ...[78]

The *Narrative* was finally completed in November 1851 although it was not officially released until early the following year. After his particular brand of venom Huxley's reaction was surprisingly complimentary. He wrote to Thompson 'I hope you have seen McGillivray's [sic] book. It is very creditable I think'.[79]

Others agreed with Huxley's assessment. In a somewhat backhanded compliment Sir William Hooker stated that he felt it was 'better than could be expected from a man of restless uncouth appearance and manners'.[80] The *Narrative* also received favourable reviews from *The Literary Gazette* and the *Examiner.*[81] Huxley published his own review of the *Narrative* in the *Westminster Review* titled 'Science at Sea' in 1854 which was, in truth, less review than a detailed look at Huxley's own experiences on board the vessel.[82]

By the time the book was complete, MacGillivray was in serious trouble. He had a young family to support, growing debts and no employment on the immediate horizon. By November 1851 MacGillivray was forced to write to his old family friend, James Harley seeking yet another loan. 'When I last wrote I expressed a hope that next time I did so I should probably be in better circumstances, this has not turned out to be the case, and matters are as bad as ever'.[83] He sought anything to help - £2 or £3 - a small loan to help see him through until a position either at home, or abroad turned up. Several influential people had assured him, he wrote, that he would not have to wait too long. As he wrote one baby was shaking the table while the other one stood pulling at his coat. He wrote bitterly of the nature of his employment stating that:

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[77] Huxley to Thomson, 8 June 1851, in Huxley, *Diary*, 357-358.

[78] Huxley to Thomson, 27 July 1851, in Huxley, *Diary*, 359.

[79] Huxley to Thomson, 10 December 1851, in Huxley, *Diary*, 360.

[80] W. Hooker to Beaufort, 1 January 1852, Great Britain. Hydrographic Dept., Records M2318-2337, 1779-1918. Australian Joint Copying Project, National Library of Australia and State Library of New South Wales. Canberra: Australian Joint Copying Project, microform M2322-2324, Pre 1857 in-letters.

[81] *The Literary Gazette, and Journal of Science and Art*, no. 8822, 20 December 1851, 891-3. *The Examiner*, 27 December 1851, 820-22.

[82] T.H. Huxley, 'Science at Sea', *Westminster Review*, 61 (1854): 98-119.

[83] MacGillivray to Harley, 11 November 1851, Harley Correspondence, Leicester and Rutland Record Office, 13D56/3, f.47. Interestingly – this is the last letter from MacGillivray contained in the Harley

> …were it not for the precarious nature of my late occupation I should not now at the age of 30 have to ask pecuniary assistance from any one. As it was I spin out my pay to the very last.[84]

He warned Harley that he felt he had to mention that if a loan were granted he had no immediate way of repaying. MacGillivray mentioned to Harley that he had already written to his father, seeking to send Williamina and the children up to Aberdeen but that his father had replied that they were in no position to take care of his family and could not offer any assistance. One of his creditors, Mr Best of Aberdeen, began proceedings against MacGillivray to attempt to recover his loan.[85]

Things went from bad to worse. Soon after his letter to Harley, MacGillivray was forced to write a more urgent note, this time to Gould, seeking immediate help. He wrote from Cursitor St, Chancery Lane, a street full of 'sponging houses'.[86] These houses were run by bailiffs who would detain debtors until their debts could be resolved or they were sent on to debtor's prison. MacGillivray dashed off a note to Gould, 'Pray if possible come to me here at once as I am in custody & require bail that I shall not leave the country within 8 days'.[87]

While not in the same trouble as MacGillivray, these were also lean years for Huxley. He battled with the Admiralty seeking their financial assistance to publish his researches from the *Rattlesnake* and worked tirelessly to seek positions for himself whereby he was able to earn his living from science. This task would take the next four years. That Huxley was able

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Correspondence. It may be that Harley had, by this stage, had enough of MacGillivray's constant calls for assistance.

[84] *Ibid*

[85] Fremantle to Beaufort, 1 May 1855, Great Britain. Hydrographic Dept, Records M2318-2337, 1779-1918. Canberra: Australian Joint Copying Project,. microform M2322-2324, Pre 1857 in-letters, f.358.

[86] W.J. Loftie, *The Inns of Court and Chancery*, (London: Seeley & co, 1893), 284. Loftie wrote: 'With a mind full of Thackeray and Dickens, and older romance writers than they, every street name will remind him of the days when these regions were thickly peopled with duns, and bailiffs, and sheriffs' officers, and every second house was a sponging house. What hero of romance was there who did not find himself in Cursitor Street at least once in his London career…' and 'To some of us the name of Cursitor Street recalls episodes of family history, passages which saddened our youth; elder brothers, perhaps, or cousins in trouble, aunts, sometimes mothers in tears; and even those who have no such skeletons stowed away in their cupboards have read of them till they have become a reality to the mind.', 287.

[87] MacGillivray to Gould (?) 13 November 1851, in Sauer (ed), *John Gould*, Vol.4, 566.

to do so was, in part, thanks to his and his fiancé's patience in putting off matrimony. Unlike MacGillivray, Huxley had only to worry about his own livelihood and wellbeing.

Huxley was determined to make his living in London; there would be no more travel for him. Although he contemplated positions elsewhere, in Canada and even back in Sydney, London was where he felt he would make his mark. He wrote to Henrietta, 'My course in life is taken. I will *not* leave London – I *will* make myself a name and a position as well as an income by some kind of pursuit connected with science…'[88] When Professor Forbes died in 1854 leaving the Chair of Natural History at the University of Edinburgh vacant, Huxley wrote to his sister of his hesitation to leave London despite the pay increase that taking the chair would mean he wrote: 'I shall be strongly tempted to stop in London. It is *the* place, the centre of the world.'[89]

While Huxley scoured London in search of positions and income, MacGillivray knew that his chances for employment lay with finding another position at sea – out of the country. He wrote hopefully to the explorer Sir John Richardson setting out his credentials. MacGillivray was hopeful that if an expedition was sent out in spring in search of Sir John Franklin that perhaps the Admiralty would see fit to create the post of naturalist to accompany the voyage.[90] It was doubtful that Richardson would have felt like assisting MacGillivray as he may still have held a grudge against John's father, William MacGillivray, thanks to a squabble over the naming of the Roseate gull.[91] Finally in 1852 MacGillivray secured the position of official naturalist on board HMS *Herald*. His reputation had held together just well enough for him to set out on another cruise into the waters in which he had made his name. It was just in time. Another child was on the way and his creditors were becoming insistent. He was thrilled. He was supplied with all that he asked for in the way of equipment. He had better accommodation, more space and great hopes for the future.[92] When he departed in May 1852 he had no idea that he would never set foot in the United Kingdom again nor ever again see his wife. For MacGillivray this desperately longed for voyage would end in despair, disgrace and ruin.

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[88] Huxley to Heathorn, 6 July 1853, *Life and letters of Thomas Henry Huxley*, 84.

[89] Huxley to Salt, 26 November 1854, *Life and letters of Thomas Henry Huxley*, 119.

[90] MacGillivray to Richardson, 20 November 1851, Richardson Voss collection, Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge, MS1503/44/18.

[91] For information on this controversy see Robert Ralph, *William MacGillivray*, 54. MacGillivray had published the name before Richardson even though Richardson should, by rights, have published first and therefore established his own name for the gull.

[92] MacGillivray to W. Hooker, 14 February 1852, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Directors Correspondence, Vol XXXII, f.280.

The voyage of the *Rattlesnake* had far reaching consequences for the careers of MacGillivray and Huxley. For both men it helped to define the way in which they approached the remainder of their careers. Their approaches were partly based on the way in which the experience shaped their professional outlook and partly on the personal consequences of the voyage. For both young men the voyage and its aftermath demonstrated both their strengths and failings.

Huxley comes out of any analysis of the voyage as calculating, analytical and interested in specifics. In contrast, MacGillivray appears impulsive, descriptive and above all as a generalist. None could compete with MacGillivray's energy and zeal for collecting. His skill in this facet of his work is evident at every turn and is acknowledged by even his most severe critics. His writing skills are also clear – not only in his journal which would become the basis for his *Narrative* but also in his letters home – letters which bring alive the people and the environments he encountered. Although worried about the title of 'mere collector' it is interesting to contrast his letters to another, 'mere collector', Strange, whose short notes to Gould at least, would have him appearing as almost illiterate. Throughout this period MacGillivray's failings also become evident, in particular his ongoing problems with alcohol and debt. His propensity to rush into actions, mentioned by his brother-in-law Beaton as a childhood foible, is evident in his haste to marry at a stage at which prudence dictated caution.

Professionally, the voyage demonstrated his lack of ability or real desire to convert his fieldwork into scientific theory or analysis. Although he was aware of the distinctions involved, his comments regarding being a 'mere collector' make this clear; he did nothing to change the way in which he approached his work. His marriage and subsequent debts made any contemplation of a riskier approach to his work seemingly impossible.

What choice did MacGillivray have? At 30 years of age, with two voyages under his belt and a young family to support he was only capable of thinking of one way of practicing his profession. Physically and intellectually, the life of a travelling collector suited him in a way that it would never have done for Huxley. He was locked into a mode of science that was rapidly becoming outdated. The status of such practitioners was also changing as the task was more and more likely to be allocated to paid collectors, collectors without the scientific or gentlemanly pretensions of earlier generations.

Huxley would never have found a place within the tradition of collectors that MacGillivray in many ways epitomises. In his analysis of Huxley's scientific work on board the *Rattlesnake* Julian Huxley summed up the difference saying:

> To the end of his life he could never summon up any great interest in what is broadly called Natural History, or in systematics. The discovery and description of a species new to science which was the chief zoological interest of MacGillivray, the ship's official naturalist, had no attractions for him, nor had he naturally the collector's passion.[93]

When they returned from the voyage it was Huxley who took the riskier path. His path would help to forge a new kind of scientific career. At its heart his determination was driven by the desperate desire to be reunited with his Sydney love.

Part of the value in comparing the *Rattlesnake* experiences of MacGillivray and Huxley is that it highlights the way in which science and society was changing, how different modes of collecting and analyses were creating different paths for those intent on the pursuit of science as a career. It also highlights the way in which MacGillivray was, by the age of 25, but more especially at the age of 29 at the end of the voyage of the *Rattlesnake*, entrenched in a particular mode of scientific investigation.

This mode of science was not for Huxley. Huxley would remain at the centre of things, in London, enmeshed in the clubs, politics and societies that would help to shape a different approach to scientific analysis. All of this he would achieve while MacGillivray began his long wanderings on the fringes – of science and of society.

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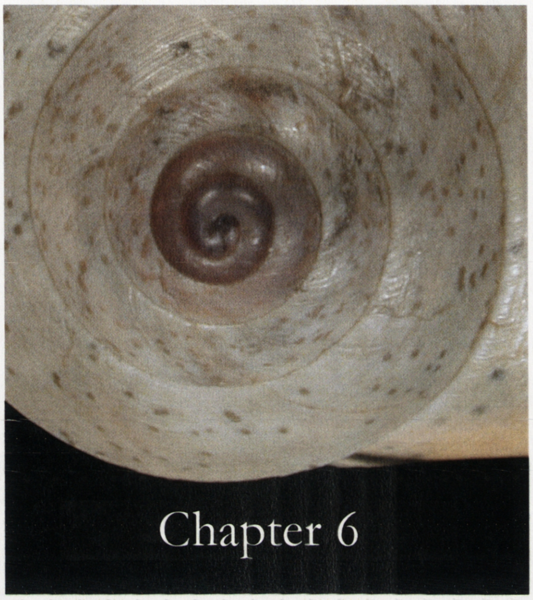
[93] Huxley, *Diary*, 72.



Chapter 6

‘Hopelessly Celtic’
May 1855 – Feb 1858

With the highs of HMS *Rattlesnake* and the lows of HMS *Herald* documented, the remainder of this thesis charts John MacGillivray's career as an independent collector. When MacGillivray stepped off HMS *Herald* and into Sydney on 27 April 1855 his situation was serious. When informed of MacGillivray's difficulties Thomas Huxley commented, in typically scathing style, that:

> It is most lamentable that a man of so much ability should have so utterly damned himself as MacGillivray has, but he is hopelessly Celtic.[1]

Clawing his way out of the mess, which he had undoubtedly created, was never going to be easy for MacGillivray. His failure to do so is reflected in the way in which he is remembered today. It is Huxley's 'hopeless Celtic' that remains as the accepted picture of MacGillivray following his dismissal.[2] As already noted, in his biography of Huxley Adrian Desmond describes MacGillivray as ending up a 'drunken hobo'. It is this image in which he has been cast, his reputation permanently stained, his achievements too often ignored. It is because of this that there has been little attempt to investigate MacGillivray's career past this point. However MacGillivray's story had a number of interesting turns still to take.

The years between his dismissal and his death twelve years later, took him on travels throughout the south-west Pacific and into the lives of some of the key figures in the region's history. His adventures, accounts and collections provide a vivid picture of the region, and their significance warrants closer investigation. Unearthing and piecing together his movements and activities in the years after 1855 provide a very different picture of his condition and accomplishments than that which has been hitherto accepted. His first task however was to survive in the city of Sydney in the years immediately following his dismissal – the first two years form the subject of this chapter.

As Sydney lay before him the problems MacGillivray faced must have seemed insurmountable. He was in complete disgrace. He was without home, income or employment. He had insulted and offended key figures both in Britain and in his new home. He had debts to pay and a family to support and no real prospect of being able to do either. In the months following his dismissal, where he went and how he survived is not now known. MacGillivray disappeared into the city of Sydney and for a year was lost from view.

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[1] Huxley to J. Hooker, 17 November 1855, Huxley papers, Imperial College, London, 2.196 (this same letter appears with MacGillivray's name omitted in *The Life and Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley*, Vol. 1, 232. It has been misdated in as having been written in 1861).

[2] Adrian Desmond, *Huxley: The Devil's Disciple* (London: Michael Joseph, 1994), 376.

MacGillivray's silence regarding his dismissal means that it is difficult to determine what his immediate intentions were when he first stepped ashore. The only hint regarding his thoughts is given in a letter from William Milne, botanical collector on board the *Herald*, to Sir William Hooker, Director of the Botanic Gardens at Kew. Milne informed Hooker that MacGillivray would shortly be returning to England. MacGillivray's intention, Milne stated, was to visit Kew on his return to London at which time he would give his own explanations.[3] Milne made the journey from HMS *Herald*, then anchored in Watsons Bay, into the centre of Sydney several times hoping to obtain further news of MacGillivray but was disappointed to find him not in.[4]

At some point, probably quite quickly, MacGillivray made the decision not to return to England. It was not a surprising choice. Financially, returning to England would have meant returning to considerable debt and possible legal action. From a professional perspective it would have meant explanations, justifications and significant lobbying in order to salvage his reputation. It would have meant facing old friends and acquaintances such as Huxley, and attempting to enlist their aid in securing some type of employment. In contrast, Australia offered a new life filled with opportunity and with fewer recriminations. By now the vast majority of MacGillivray's adult life had been spent either at sea or wandering around the islands of the Pacific Ocean. He had spent more time in Sydney than he had in perhaps any other city. His skills and knowledge were all based on this region and so it would have made sense for him to remain and to see what kind of employment he could secure. MacGillivray's decision to remain was the result of a deliberate calculation – Australia had more to offer. As W.K Hancock wrote, opening his discussion of the concept of the independent Australian Briton, 'Men do not emigrate in despair, but in hope'.[5]

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[3] Milne to W. Hooker, 17 May 1855, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Directors' correspondence 1855, Vol. XXXV, f.318.

[4] *Ibid*

[5] W.K. Hancock, *Australia* (Brisbane: Jacaranda Press, 1961), 39.

MacGillivray was not alone in seeing a future in the Australian colony. The gold rush, which had begun in 1851, was now well underway. Prior to his dismissal MacGillivray had noted the impact of the discovery of gold on the colony in a letter to Hooker. He wrote:

> Sydney has altered more than I expected to have found after so short an absence. Of course Gold is the all absorbing topic of conversation and we already in our own little circle are becoming quite familiar (in talk only however) with the gold fields. It has been found in New Caledonia and so we [?] may pick up a nugget or two there and I shall take care that mine don't go to the British Museum as Mineralogical specimens.[6]

People were flocking to Australia to seek their fortunes. In 1852 a staggering 370,000 migrants arrived in the colony. Australia's population was set to treble over the next twenty years.[7] When the gold rush struck there was a mass exodus from the city of Sydney leaving it, for a short time at least, with the appearance of a ghost town. The impact on the city of Sydney would have been most evident during this early period of gold excitement before the gold fields of Victoria eclipsed the earlier New South Wales discoveries.[8] Prosperity and opportunity beckoned to men of business as well as men of science. Huxley himself had applied for the position of Chair of Natural History in Toronto in 1851 and if that failed had desperately hoped for the creation of a similar position at the University of Sydney (both hopes were, however, to come to nothing).[9] Adrian Desmond captures the force of this movement of professional men throughout the British Empire noting that, 'Centrifugal forces were flinging the marginal men out to the colonial edges'.[10] MacGillivray was no exception. His future looked far brighter in the rapidly growing and prosperous colony that he knew so well. The only tie that may have shaken his resolve to quit England was his responsibility for his family. There is, however, no evidence that this entered into his deliberations. A difficult mixture of pride and practicality lay at the heart of MacGillivray's decision to remain in the colony and it would lead him in interesting directions over future years.

No matter how prosperous conditions in the colony were becoming, in cataloguing MacGillivray's difficulties it is clear that he was in for a challenging time. No job, no money, a reputation in tatters and stranded a long way from home. The benefits of his new location are also clear. In contrast the plight of MacGillivray's wife, Williamina, and family back in London was - in every way - disastrous and it would appear that MacGillivray, busy with his own affairs, largely left others to deal with his domestic affairs as best they could on his behalf.

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[6] MacGillivray to W. Hooker, February 23 1853, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, Records M730-788, 1793-1928. Australian Joint Copying Project, National Library of Australia and State Library of New South Wales. Canberra: Australian Joint Copying Project, microform, Kew Directors' correspondence.

[7] Graeme Davison, J. Hirst & S. Macintyre (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1998), 284.

[8] See Paul Pickering, 'The Finger of God: Gold's impact on New South Wales' in Iain McCalman, Alexander Cook & Andrew Reeves (eds), *Gold: Forgotten Histories and Lost Objects of Australia* (Cambridge; UK, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 37-51.

[9] Desmond, *Huxley*, 168-169.

[10] *Ibid*, 168.

While on board HMS *Herald* MacGillivray had attempted to make provision for his family from afar by persuading the prominent conchologist and natural history dealer, Hugh Cuming, to assist in their maintenance. A portion of MacGillivray's pay was to be sent to Cuming in order that he could support the family. As has already been noted this arrangement did not work as planned. In February 1855 Cuming sent a letter to the collector Frederick Strange.[11] He wrote, 'In the strictest confidence I write to ask you what Mr. MacGillivray is about in Sydney when there...'[12] Cuming alleged that MacGillivray had failed to send through the money urgently required to support his wife and family. He wrote that he had himself been allowing Mrs MacGillivray £6 a month as well as paying for other incidental expenses. By the time this letter reached Australia MacGillivray's debts to him, Cuming informed Strange, would total over £200. This was taking into account the material that Cuming had sold on MacGillivray's behalf. The situation was desperate:

> ...if he does not send me money immediately he comes back to Sydney again I shall not advance his wife anything more and she and the children must go to the workhouse. You can show him this letter, but on no account let anyone know it besides himself. All what I have done has been for the sake of his wife and children. Their pitable [sic] state makes my heart grieve for them.[13]

The same year that MacGillivray departed, Williamina had had another child, a son, John William. Cuming informed Denham that this event and the attendant cost, had meant that Cuming was supporting the family to a far greater extent than he ever imagined he would have to.

At around the same time Cuming also wrote to Captain Denham of the *Herald* in similar vein. Denham had agreed to act to ensure that MacGillivray would fulfil his financial obligations. In this letter Cuming also informed Denham that as well as fitting him out and agreeing to support Williamina, he also settled all of MacGillivray's outstanding debts apart from that owing to a creditor in Aberdeen.

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[11] Strange would not have received the letter as he was killed on Percy Island on 15 October 1854.

[12] Cuming to Strange, 1 February 1855, in H.M. Whittell, 'Frederick Strange', *Australian Zoologist*, 11 (1947): 113.

[13] *Ibid*

With the real threat of the workhouse looming and three small children to care for, the news of her husband's dismissal would have sent Williamina into a state of despair. She wrote to a number of MacGillivray's old friends and associates – hoping, begging, pleading for their assistance. J.W. Mill forwarded one of these notes on to Hooker, writing:

> The enclosed note, which I have received from Mrs MacGillivray, must be my apology for introducing to your notice the very painful position in which she is likely to be placed.[14]

Unfortunately Williamina's note does not appear to have been saved however the situation was obviously serious. Mill continued:

> I am totally ignorant of the circumstances connected with the separation of her husband from the Herald, but I understand generally that some unhappy differences between him and the Captain led to his removal from the Ship; that in consequence of this her periodical supply of money either has been, or will be stopped; and that, having herself, and three children to support, she will be reduced to a state of absolute destitution.[15]

Huxley also wrote to Hooker on Williamina's behalf with a solution in mind:

> MacGillivray has made a horrid mess of it, and I am sorry to say, from what I know of him, that I cannot doubt where the fault lies. The worst of it is that he has a wife and three children over here, left without a penny or any means of support. The poor woman wrote to me the other day, and when I went to see her I found her at the last shilling and contemplating the workhouse as her next step. She has brothers in Australia, and it appeared to me that the only way to do her any good was to get her out. She cannot starve there, and there will be more hope for her children than an English poor-house.[16]

Huxley could not have helped but contrast his own affairs with those of MacGillivray. Having fallen in love at much the same time, he and his fiancé had just endured a separation of over five years, putting off their marriage until Huxley had secured the means to support a wife and family. His beloved Henrietta had finally arrived in London and the two married in July 1855. This year therefore marked, in many ways, the ultimate parting of the ways for two lives that had for a short time travelled along parallel lines. Huxley's life and career were blossoming while MacGillivray's fell apart in tatters.

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[14] Mill to W. Hooker, 18 October 1855, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, Directors Correspondence, Vol. XXXV, f.315.

[15] *Ibid*

[16] Huxley to J. Hooker, 17 November 1855, Huxley papers, Imperial College, London, 2.196.

Although the exact financial details are not known, MacGillivray's friends and associates managed to raise the amount required to send Williamina and the children out to Australia. Hooker certainly played a central part in their rescue as Huxley's next letter to him demonstrated. He wrote:

> I could find it in my heart to scold you well for your generous aid to my poor client. I assure you I told you all about the case because it was fresh in my mind, and without the least notion of going to you for that kind of aid. May it come back to you in some good shape or other. I find it is no use to look for help from the emigration people, but I have no fear of being able to get the £50 which will send them out by the Walter Hood.[17]

As Huxley's first letter to Hooker indicated – the intention was to send Williamina and family out to be near her brothers, not necessarily intending a reunion with her husband. The MacGillivray family boarded the *Washington Irvine* on 2 December 1855.

MacGillivray and Williamina would however, not meet again. Two weeks out of Sydney, late in February 1856, Williamina died of consumption. The Docker from the *Washington Irvine* reported to Williamina's brother, James Gray, that she was in very poor health when she came on board the vessel - brought on, he thought, by severe suffering.[18] This, combined with the cold weather during the voyage, had finally taken its toll. It is impossible to know how Williamina's death affected MacGillivray. Given his dire financial circumstances the blow might not have been as great as it might otherwise have been. Williamina's father, Patrick Gray, had died in 1851 and so it was left to Williamina's brother to write to Huxley thanking him for his kind attention to his sister and informing him of Williamina's death. He reported that the children were quite well and now in good hands. These hands, however, were not those of their father. Of him Gray reported that he was doing 'no good' and that any hope of reform was 'now doubtful'.[19] Milne reported to Hooker that Williamina's brothers were not well off and extra three mouths to feed was probably a considerable burden that they could well have done without.

It would seem that MacGillivray had very little, if anything, to do with his children from this point on. Nowhere in any of MacGillivray's surviving letters or writings does he mention his children apart from the brief note of their birth in his table of births, deaths and marriages in the notebook he kept at the time.[20] With Williamina's death and the abandonment of his children to his wife's brothers, MacGillivray's family life to all intents and purposes came to a halt. From March 1856 MacGillivray was free to pursue whatever opportunities Sydney threw his way. His three voyages to Australia had entailed frequent visits to the city, often of extended duration. He had been resident in the city for a period of five months as recently as January 1854. This knowledge and experience would now become invaluable.

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[17] Huxley to J. Hooker, 19 November 1855, Huxley papers, Imperial College, London, 2.110.
[18] Gray to Huxley, 17 March 1856, Huxley papers, Imperial College, London, 17.109.
[19] *Ibid*

The first report of his activities following his dismissal was not a positive one. HMS *Herald* had left Sydney on 23 May 1855 to undertake surveys in the Fiji group. They returned to Sydney nine months later on 3 February 1856. In March Milne wrote to Hooker reporting on the results of the cruise and stating 'As for Mr MacGillvay [sic] he is walking about in a state of destitution it is a pity to see a man of his superior mind so far forget himself.'[21]

Milne's report paints a vivid picture of despair and desperation. MacGillivray's circumstances were certainly not comfortable. There were few friends that he could have called on for assistance. His old friends and colleagues John Gilbert and Frederick Strange were both already dead. Given the circumstances he may not have felt able to seek assistance from his wife's family, even if they were in a position to offer it. He may not have been aware that his brother Paul had arrived in Australia in 1855, but even if he was, Paul had gone to Victoria and may not yet have been in a position to help. Given the amount of time he had spent in Sydney it is likely that there were at least some friends he could rely on. James Fowler Wilcox, his old shipmate from the *Rattlesnake*, was still in Sydney running his taxidermy and natural history shop in Hunter Street. MacGillivray quite possibly sought assistance from his former messmate. It was, however, obviously vital, that he begin to see what kind of career he could carve out in Sydney.

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[20] For Isabella he notes the date, country, city, address and year of birth. For Marion he notes just the city, address and year. For John there is no date, no address, just a year and the city, London. John MacGillivray, 'Natural history notebook 1855-66', Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, ML/B944. I have found very little information regarding MacGillivray's daughters. Some information is available regarding his son John William MacGillivray (known as William). William had been born in London in 1852 shortly after his father had departed on board the *Herald*. When Williamina died on board the *Washington Irvine* William was only three years old. As indicated in his uncle's letter to Huxley, his mother's family raised him after his arrival in Australia. Little is known of his early life but contact with his father was never established. William's diary, kept for the years 1882, 1883 and 1884 is now in the Mitchell Library. At this stage he was in his early thirties. The diary gives some picture of the life that he experienced in Australia. It does not appear to have been an especially happy one. His diary shows that he was employed in Sydney at the Australian Joint Stock Bank in George Street but that he was forced to resign because of ongoing health issues. In May 1884 he recorded in his diary that he had applied for a job at the Australian Museum and that he had been to see Dr Cox who received him kindly and told him of some good vacancies at the Museum. William records that 'He said he was glad I called as he had no idea I was about and he says he will do all he can for me "for the sake of my poor old Father"'. (John William MacGillivray - diary, 1882 – 1884, entry for 2 April 1884. Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, MLMSS 6186.) William secured a job at the Museum with the help of E.P. Ramsay, who had been appointed as Curator in 1874. He was employed as a curatorial assistant, messenger, cataloguer and general help. Perhaps at the urging of Ramsay or Cox once he began his work at the Museum he recorded that he was 'reading the Voyage of the "Rattlesnake" written by my Father. It is very interesting to me, as it gives me some information about my Father of whom I know so little'. (John William MacGillivray - diary, entry for 8 August 1884). William was employed at the Australian Museum for several years despite having no real qualifications and continuing in very poor health. He suffered with a persistent cough and lived in fear of being caught in the rain. Ramsay, who by 1884 was a figure of considerable influence in Sydney's scientific circles put up with William's weaknesses and continually sought ways to help him through his difficulties. William's last diary entry was recorded in December 1884. William died in 1885. Ramsay informed the Trustees of the Museum of his death and deplored the fact that he left a wife and children wholly unprovided for. William's diary makes no mention of his two sisters.

[21] Milne to W. Hooker, March 1856, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Australian Letters, Directors Correspondence, Vol. LXXIV, f.108.

MacGillivray's attempts to create a new career in Sydney revolved around two activities – membership of, and activity within, one of Sydney's newly formed scientific societies and scientific writing for a popular audience. As well as providing a different picture of the man that MacGillivray had become, these strands of his work provide a glimpse into the networks and politics operating within Sydney's scientific community both within institutions and in the general population throughout the 1850s. Gaining an insight into this era of Sydney's history is particularly interesting as the scientific scene in Sydney in the 1850s was experiencing a period of change and reinvigoration.[22] This period is notable for the growth and development of an active and broad based scientific community within New South Wales and, eventually, a more cooperative approach to scientific work throughout the Australian colonies. These changes revolved around Governor Denison's more inclusive and professional approach to science and would open up opportunities hitherto controlled by Sydney's Macleay family and their associates. In order to appreciate the changes that were afoot it is first necessary to briefly consider the modes in which science had operated in the colony in earlier periods.

Scientific research has, in many ways, always had to battle for recognition, support and funding. Within the colonies of Australia throughout the 1820s and 30s scientific investigation was often seen as an indulgence, something that should not be encouraged at the expense of more practical endeavours that would better serve the growth of the young settlements.[23] In his *Historical and Statistical Account of New South Wales* published in 1834 the Reverend John Dunmore Lang stated that:

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[22] Ann Moyal, *Scientists in nineteenth century Australia: A documentary history*, (Melbourne: Cassell Australia, 1976), 4.

[23] Roy McLeod, 'On visiting the 'Moving Metropolis': Reflections on the Architecture of Imperial Science', *Historical Records of Australian Science*, 5, 3 (1982): 9.

> The only animals whose natural history it is deemed of consequence to investigate in New South Wales are the sheep and the bull…; and all the branches of study which the world of nature may be supposed to present to the scientific inquirer in the Australian colonies, the only one that has hitherto engrossed the pursuit of all classes is, *how to make the most of it.*[24]

Ann Moyal has stated that for the most part the citizens of Australia were, initially at least, 'antipathetic to science.'[25] While the natural history of the Australian continent had generated enormous interest with scientific bodies and eminent individuals based in Europe, home grown scientific endeavours had been limited and spasmodic. Attention had either been focussed on visitors who then returned to Europe with their collections, or on Australian based collectors sending specimens back to Europe for analysis, description and classification.[26] This was an era and approach in which MacGillivray had, of course, played a significant role. There were simply more pressing issues confronting the settlers of the colony – such issues as describing the natural history of the continent would have to wait or be carried out by those with the inclination or resources back 'at home'. With a few notable exceptions the infant colony did not have the population, infrastructure or even desire to delve into the scientific world that formed their new environment.

This approach had the effect of leaving the field of science essentially free for those gentlemen who had the leisure to pursue it in their own time and, importantly, at their own expense. Within New South Wales two colonial secretaries, Alexander McLeay[27] and Edward Deas Thomson helped, through their influence in scientific affairs, to continue this tradition – that of the amateur gentleman in preference to the professional scientist.[28] The Macleay family was the ultimate expression of this tradition within New South Wales and they would have a profound effect on the development of scientific affairs throughout the nineteenth century in Australia. In the 1830s and 1840s the Australian Museum and the Sydney Botanic Gardens provided the focus for the energies of those with scientific interests in New South Wales.[29] The domination of, in particular, the development of the Australian Museum, by the clique that surrounded these gentlemen is a theme that will be explored in later chapters.

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[24] An historical and statistical account of New South Wales (London: 1834),183 quoted in Ann Mozley Moyal, 'Evolution and the climate of opinion in Australia', *Victorian studies*, 10, 4 (June 1967): 411.

[25] Ann Moyal, *Scientists in nineteenth century Australia*, 4.

[26] Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, 'Australian Museums of Natural History: Public Priorities and Scientific Initiatives in the 19th Century', *Historical Records of Australian Science*, 5, 4 (1983): 1.

[27] Spelling of Macleay is different – William Macleay was responsible for change. See Kohlstedt, 'Australian Museums of Natural History', 20.

[28] Michael Hoare, *Science and scientific associations in Eastern Australia: 1820-1890*, PhD Thesis, Australian National University, 1974, 127.

[29] *Ibid*, 129.

As well as the gentlemen of science the 1830s and 1840s are notable for the increase in the number of individuals with scientific interests working throughout the colonies. In his analysis of science and scientific associations in Eastern Australia, Michael Hoare has labelled the period between 1830 and 1855 as an age of individual enterprise.[30] A range of specific individuals whose enthusiasms, support and knowledge provoked and promoted developments in specific fields of research or collecting either settled, or at least made significant stays, in the country. Such individuals included explorers such as Ludwig Leichhardt and Paul Edward Strzelecki, the Surveyor-General Thomas Mitchell and geologists such as William Branwhite Clarke and Samuel Stutchbury. Leichhardt complained that although there were many individuals interested in the natural history of the colony there was little or no attempt made at coordinating their efforts or working together.[31]

Another group of individuals who were central in the development of science within the colonies were government officials who pursued a private interest in the sciences and who were able, through patronage and support, to promote sciences within their official capacities. In terms of government support the key role was that of the Governor.[32] The importance of Vice-Regal support can be seen partly in the shifting 'lead' of science between the various colonies. Governor Brisbane, with a personal interest in astronomy, helped New South Wales to scientific prominence in the 1820s. Governor Franklin and his wife Lady Jane Franklin were at the centre of a group of those interested in science in the 1840s in Tasmania. It was perhaps more due to the wealth provided by gold that enabled Victoria to take the lead in science in the 1850s and 1860s. It can be argued that it was partially due to the changes that took place under the leadership of Sir William Denison that would eventually see New South Wales taking a leading role in a more federated scientific community by the late 1870s.[33] Governors with a personal interest in science such as Brisbane, Franklin and Denison were able to promote the cause of science as part of their administrations.[34]

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[30] *Ibid*, 126.
[31] *Ibid*, 127.
[32] Kohlstedt, 'Australian Museums of Natural History', 2.
[33] Hoare, *Science and scientific associations in Eastern Australia*, 1974. iii
[34] Colin Finney, *Paradise Revealed: Natural History in nineteenth-century Australia* (Melbourne: Museum of Victoria, 1993), 31.

At the heart of every analysis of the place that science could, or should, play within the colony was the issue of resources. The pursuit of science needed to be perceived as something that would make a real contribution to the colony. Scientific bodies met with better success when they had as their basis an emphasis on 'useful arts'.[35] The desire on the part of settlers and colonial authorities to examine and promote the produce of the colony for exploitation and further development that had been expressed in 1834 by Lang, had not changed significantly by the 1850s. A thorough knowledge of the potential of the natural resources of different regions brought into being a number of the more long-lived societies and interest groups, mostly horticultural or agricultural, which had a loosely scientific basis. Aligned with this interest was the push for further exploration of the country's unknown areas in the hope of discovering suitable sites for future development and expansion and, of course, gold. The prominence of the sciences of geology and botany can be seen as a product of this focus on resources that made a contribution to the wealth of the empire. The quick growth of state Botanic Gardens and the appointment of government surveyors and geologists are further evidence of the dominance of such thinking.

The identification and exploitation of resources was a major driver of the development of the British Empire. The Botanic Gardens at Kew played a key part in the identification of plants that would serve different needs. William Hooker's Museum of Economic Botany at Kew Gardens opened to the public in 1848.[36] Its display of gums, resins, timbers and vegetable products were in part an official recognition of the role that the study of botany could contribute to the wealth of Empire. As late as 1927 the Empire Marketing Board provided Kew with a sum of £4000 to appoint an Economic Botanist to further 'investigate the scientific and economic investigation of Imperial resources'.[37]

It was the interplay of these factors of government support, individual enterprise and interests in resource exploitation that would provide the necessary backdrop for changes within the scientific community in New South Wales in the 1850s. The increase in professional and government scientific appointments and institutions would also legitimise scientific activities and free them from some of the constraints imposed by pursuing a purely economic or financial benefit for the colony. The benefits to the colony as provided through scientific analysis and endeavour would also come to be better acknowledged and appreciated.

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[35] Ann Moyal, *Scientists in nineteenth century Australia*, 4.

[36] Ray Desmond, *Kew: The history of the Royal Botanic Gardens*, (London: The Harvill Press & Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, 1995), 191.

[37] *Ibid*, 313.

MacGillivray's activities in Sydney in 1855 can be seen to have been directly related to and influenced by the state of the Sydney scientific scene as outlined above. His life offers a fascinating insight into the way in which these large themes influenced an individual life. His first task in re-establishing himself was to join a scientific society. The history of scientific societies in the city of Sydney had been a chequered one. Various groups had attempted to establish themselves - most were short-lived - however the time was now right for a new type of society to form, one that perhaps had room for a figure such as MacGillivray.[38] Earlier scientific associations in New South Wales had functioned more as elite clubs than working societies. These associations were centres where gentlemen could meet, socialise and share their resources (mostly libraries) rather than practical centres of knowledge and discussion. The overwhelming majority of societies in Sydney during the 1830-1860s were horticulturally based. Their primary interest was in the utilization and further development of the products of the colony. MacGillivray chose to join one such society - the Horticultural Improvement Society (HIS), at a time that was important for the development of Sydney's scientific societies. The Horticultural Improvement Society had been founded on 15 January 1855. On 8 December 1856 it was amalgamated with the Australian Botanic and Horticultural Society to form the Australian Horticultural and Agricultural society.[39]

In his natural history notebook MacGillivray recorded for 28 June 1856 'A few days before Anniversary meeting of H.I.S in School of Arts – Secretary then'.[40] A number of meetings advertised in the *Sydney Morning Herald* for this period list MacGillivray as the secretary but his tenure appears to have been of relatively short duration.[41] As well as this official role

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[38] J.H. Maiden, *A Contribution to a history of the Royal Society of New South Wales: with information in regard to other New South Wales Societies,* (Sydney: Royal Society of New South Wales, 1919). In his history of the Royal Society of NSW Maiden has detailed the history of the societies as follows. Philosophical Society of Australasia (Dec.1821-1822), Agricultural Society of NSW (5 July 1822- 22 February, 1826), Australian Society to promote the growth and consumption of Colonial Produce and Manufactures (1830-1836), Australian Floral and Horticultural Society (1836-1848), Australasian Botanic and Horticultural Society (20 June 1848-8 December 1856), Horticultural Improvement Society of NSW (15 January 1855-8 December 1856). Australian Horticultural and Agricultural Society (8 December 1856). Australian Philosophical Society (19 January, 1850 – 30 July, 1855), Philosophical Society of NSW (30 July 1855-12 December, 1866), Royal Society of NSW (12 December 1866-).

[39] *Ibid,* 239.

[40] It was certainly around this time that the first meeting of the society occurred. Maiden records that 1 July 1856 was (officially) the commencement of the second year of the Society's existence. *Ibid,* 243

[41] Advertisements in which MacGillivray is listed as secretary appear in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 29 August, 11 September, 15 September, 17 September, 4 October and 6 October, 1856.

MacGillivray was also an active lecturer, delivering at least three papers to the society; 'On the Vegetable Productions of the South Sea Islands', 'On Sandalwood' and 'On the Vegetable Productions of Cape York'.[42]

The aims of the HIS were recorded as follows:

> ...to promote the development of the resources of Australia by diffusing as widely as possible, scientific and practical information on the study and pursuit of botany, including horticulture and agriculture, by holding monthly meetings at which lectures are delivered, and essays and other communications read and discussed, by awarding prizes for products of superior merit, and for treatises on subjects of importance in connexion with its objects, and by establishing an experimental garden.[43]

They are a clear reminder of the way in which scientific bodies pitched their activities around their usefulness to the growth of the colony.

Although the title of the HIS might indicate otherwise, the interests of its members were broad. There was a significant overlap of membership with other scientific associations and a range of prominent Sydney figures counted themselves as members including William Carron, botanist to the ill-fated Kennedy expedition, the Reverend George E Turner, Honorary Secretary to the Australian Museum, and William Sheridan Wall, then Curator of the Australian Museum.

The most significant overlap in membership was with the other major scientific body established in the same period - the Philosophical Society of New South Wales. Sir William Denison established this body in 1855 – reconstituting an earlier body, the Australian Society, which had been formed in 1850. The Australian Society also traced its lineage to an earlier society – the first in Sydney's history – The Philosophical Society of Australia, formed by Governor Brisbane in 1821 and in operation until 1822. The first meeting of Denison's organisation was held in May 1856.[44] The establishment of the Philosophical Society was key to Denison's plans to reinvigorate the study of science in the colony of Sydney. The object of the society, outlined in its constitution, was to 'receive at its stated meetings, original papers on subjects of science, art, literature, and philosophy'.[45] Denison was determined to broaden scientific interest and endeavour throughout the colony of

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[42] Although the exact dates on which these lectures occurred is not recorded, the Annual Report for the societies shows that all three had been delivered prior to 26 July 1856.

[43] Maiden, *A Contribution to a history of the Royal Society of New South Wales*, 241-242.

[44] *Ibid*, 259.

[45] *Ibid*, 261.

New South Wales. In his study of Scientific Societies in Eastern NSW Michael Hoare notes that:

> Denison achieved what resource-orientated, economically and utility minded men of science had striven to effect throughout the forties: a scientific association suited to colonial conditions, a society at once broad enough to accommodate diverse interests without earning a reputation for exclusivism and elitism yet with standards reasonable enough to attract competent, reputable amateurs and professionals...[46]

MacGillivray's participation in the HIS makes it clear that he was attempting to build his networks in Sydney. His choice of the HIS over the Philosophical Society probably relates mostly to the timing of the respective founding of the organisations. The HIS provided MacGillivray with an outlet for his knowledge and introduced him to men with similar interests to his own. This would have provided a platform from which he could have hoped for further employment and opportunities to arise. His choice could also have been influenced by the circles in which he was mixing and whatever networks he had already been able to establish.

One incident that occurred during MacGillivray's short tenure as Secretary of the HIS is particularly interesting. It highlights the deep divisions that existed within the scientific scene during this period, in particular the tensions between horticulture and botany. During the fourteenth monthly meeting of the HIS a discussion was held regarding the *Sorghum saccharatum* or Chinese Sugar Cane. A paper had been read by Mr Creswick regarding his own cultivation of this highly useful plant. In his role as Secretary MacGillivray noted that following on from this paper numerous applications from across the colony had been received requesting seeds for cultivation. A Dr Douglass asked if this was the same plant that had been recommended by Mr Edward Deas Thomson during his last visit to Europe. The meeting agreed that the plant was indeed the same but noted that the seeds cultivated by Mr Creswick were obtained by him in France and that they were not those that had been deposited by Thomson at the Botanic Gardens in Sydney. MacGillivray then launched an attack on the gardens. He was reported as saying that:

> ...of the two bushels of seed sent by Mr Thomson, the colony had generally heard no word, or of the results therefrom. True it had been grown in the Botanic Gardens, but though a public institution for disseminating information on these subjects, no account of the plant, no inducement to cultivate, and no offer of distribution of seeds to the public generally had been made...[47]

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[46] Hoare, *Science and scientific associations in Eastern Australia*, 178.

[47] 'Horticultural Improvement Society', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 September 1856, 4.

This public attack was too much for Charles Moore, Director of the gardens, to ignore. In a letter to the editor of the SMH he defended his reputation and that of the gardens saying that:

> I have hitherto treated the remarks reported in the Herald to have been made by certain members of this "Improvement Society" respecting me with silence; but, in this instance, the statement is so directly at variance with truth, and calculated to injure me in the estimation of the gentleman who procured and sent out to me from Europe the seeds of the plant in question, that I am induced to make known the simple facts of the case.[48]

He went on to state that the seeds (considerably fewer than MacGillivray had stated) had been distributed exactly as had been requested by Thomson. He had sown some in the Botanic Garden, delivered some to the Governor-General and sent some to the government residents of Moreton Bay and Port Curtis. MacGillivray responded a week later in a letter to the editor saying:

> What distribution has been made from the Botanic Gardens is best known to the director. This, however, I believe, that no nurseryman or gardener about Sydney received a single grain from that quarter, and that it was not generally known to the public that it could be procured there, is sufficiently evident from the number of applications to me for portions of Mr Creswick's donation. That some applications were made at the Botanic Gardens for sorghum I can imagine, from being aware of the fact that the wrong seed was in one case given to an applicant.[49]

This skirmish appears to have ended MacGillivray's association with the HIS. No further mention is made of him in any reports of the meetings held. No further letters appear. Perhaps this public confrontation was too much for members of the society. The dispute highlights the pressures and tensions that botanic gardens were put under throughout this period. Their role and function was something that was often contested. How much they operated as functional gardens, ornamental gardens, experimental gardens or gardens made for leisure was never quite clear. As Richard Drayton in his history of Kew Gardens has demonstrated, this tension, a 'confused public identity', was true not only of colonial botanic gardens but even of the great Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew.[50] Tensions between the Sydney botanic gardens and nurserymen during this period were evident. It is interesting that, in this instance at least, MacGillivray seems to have aligned himself with the nurserymen over the botanic gardens in this instance. This incident is also a clear demonstration that MacGillivray had retained his talent for making enemies, and making them publicly.

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[48] Charles Moore, 'To the Editor', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 September 1856, 8.

[49] John MacGillivray, 'The Chinese Sugar Cane – To the Editor', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 September 1856, 3.

[50] Drayton, *Nature's Government*, 137.

A number of papers read before the HIS and the PSNSW were published by James Waugh as *The Sydney Magazine of Science and Art*, initially in a magazine monthly format and then in two volumes – the first in 1857 and the second in 1859. The papers demonstrate the emphasis placed on issues of practical science or a 'spirit of utility'.[51] These were the first scientific society proceedings that were published in New South Wales.[52] MacGillivray's contribution 'Some Remarks on the Sandalwood of the South Sea Islands', appeared in 1859 volume. MacGillivray commented on the notoriety of sandalwood traders stating that, although in some instances 'natives' of the islands had made unprovoked attacks, 'many murders and other atrocities committed by the sandalwood traders have been carefully concealed by those who, it may be inferred, could not justify them'.[53] It would not be long before MacGillivray would be able to make further observations regarding such atrocities as his career took a new direction.

Joseph Dyer's comments in the introduction of the *Sydney Magazine of Science and Art* highlight some of the difficulties faced by those interested in scientific pursuits in New South Wales at the time. The first volume reflects the hope and encouragement received with the appointment of William Denison and his active interest in promoting science. Dyer wrote:

> New South Wales can yet boast but few gentlemen of leisure who feel pride and interest in pursuing science for its own sake, and are ready to devote both time and money to its advancement. Such a class will doubtless arise, especially now that science is becoming fashionable under the auspices of our energetic and sagacious Governor, Sir WILLIAM DENISON…[54]

Dyer noted that although they had not yet been able to completely cover the expense of the production of the magazine he was hopeful that in the future there would be an increase in support.[55]

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[51] Gregory Melleuish, 'Beneficent Providence and the Quest for Harmony: The Cultural Setting for Colonial Science in Sydney, 1850-1890', *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales,* 118, 3 (1986): 177.

[52] Michael Hoare, 'Adolph Basser Library: Notes on Research - Some primary sources for the history of scientific societies in Australia in the Nineteenth Century', *Records of Australian Academy of Science,* 1,4 (1966): 73.

[53] John MacGillivray, 'Some Remarks on the Sandalwood of the South Sea Islands', in Joseph Dyer (ed), *Sydney Magazine of Science and Art,* Vol.2 (Sydney: James W. Waugh: 1859),196.

[54] Joseph Dyer (ed), *Sydney Magazine of Science and Art,* Vol.1 (Sydney: James W. Waugh: 1858), Preface.

[55] *Ibid*

The tenor of the second, and last, volume is a stark contrast to such optimism. If MacGillivray was hoping that the magazine would bring his name to a wider audience he was to be disappointed. Dyer complained that:

> We never indulged the hope that a publication of this character would meet with a very large circle of readers, for scientific journals, even in England, have but a limited circulation; but we confess that we did expect that the members of the two Societies, whose papers we have printed, would desire to possess the records of those bodies with which they had associated themselves. But the constant attention to business, which is characteristic of colonial life, appears very unfriendly to the development of a taste for science, literature, and art.[56]

Despite the publisher Waugh's difficulties in maintaining sufficient interest in the publication of the proceedings of the two societies the organisations themselves stood the test of time. Both of these bodies were to become successful ongoing enterprises – the Australian Horticultural and Agricultural society was the precursor to the Horticultural Society of NSW and of the Agricultural Society of NSW.[57] The Philosophical Society of NSW was granted Royal recognition in 1866 and became the Royal Society of NSW, the title under which it still operates today. What is clear is that the two societies had hit upon sustainable, if not immediately wildly successful, models. Their success is evidence that New South Wales now had sufficient people with scientific interests and backgrounds that, with adequate support from government, they were able to obtain the required momentum to create space for science in Sydney's public life.

An examination of the scientific activities and the level and type of interest in scientific enquiry in Sydney in the 1850s helps to explain MacGillivray's activities following his dismissal from the *Herald.* Despite the accounts of his degradation from people such as Milne it is clear that MacGillivray was attempting some kind of a recovery as early as 1856 – the year following his dismissal – in addition to his activities within the HIS. Evidence for this comes in a series of eight articles, which were published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* between 6 June and 31 July 1856.[58] The series is titled *Sketches of Australian Zoology* and is signed with what would become MacGillivray's usual journalistic signature of 'J.M'. This series is an interesting forerunner to MacGillivray's later series' written for the *Sydney*

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[56] Joseph Dyer (ed), *Sydney Magazine of Science and Art*, Vol. 2, (Sydney: James W. Waugh: 1859), Preface.
[57] Maiden, *A Contribution to a history of the Royal Society of New South Wales*, 244.
[58] At least three of the series were also reprinted in the *Perth Gazette* and *Independent Journal of Politics and News* in October 1856. This series has never before been identified as having been authored by MacGillivray and has not been discussed in any other examination of his life or career.

Morning Herald.[59] The tone of the series is light-hearted and yet authoritative. MacGillivray demonstrated his breadth of knowledge concerning previous expeditions to, and throughout, Australia. The articles quote from sources as wide ranging as Hawkesworth (Cook's editor), Flinders, Stokes, Carron (Kennedy expedition), Mitchell and Leichhardt - through to the work of lesser known writers such as Mrs Charles Meredith whom he took to task for an error in her 'amusing' work regarding her misidentification of the Australian bustard. In this particular instance MacGillivray was buying into a small colonial drama. Meredith's book *Notes and Sketches of New South Wales*, had been an enormous success in England and Australia. The *Sydney Morning Herald* was less impressed with the book as it contained severe criticisms of colonial society to which the paper took exception.[60] It was well within MacGillivray's interests to take the part of the *Sydney Morning Herald* in this debate. The series draws heavily on MacGillivray's own travels, experiences and observations. The eight articles emphasise his own long history in the country and his ongoing fascination with its human and animal populations.

MacGillivray opens this series with observations regarding the early days of exploration and colonisation of Australia. He refers to '*our* great island continent' [my emphasis]. It is clear that MacGillivray's world had shifted. Australia is now his domain, his concern.[61] However it is interesting to consider the extent to which Australia had also taken on a different significance and become home for MacGillivray. Did his use of the word 'our' in this instance indicate a greater shift of thinking perhaps not just professionally speaking but also personally? MacGillivray's profession, exposing him as it did to Australia in a way that few others would have been perhaps meant that he developed a connection with the country of Australia that was more intense than other recent emigrants. MacGillivray would certainly have missed his old home but perhaps as W.K Hancock wrote he was a man 'in love with two soils'.[62]

His connection with his adopted country is evident throughout the *Sketches* series. MacGillivray began:

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[59] Hoare notes that the *Sydney Morning Herald* was 'a consistent supporter of science'. Hoare, *Science and scientific associations in Eastern Australia,* 126.

[60] Tim Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth* (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 2000), 128.

[61] MacGillivray uses the phrase again in his letter to the editor regarding the Chinese Sugar Cane, writing: 'That question, I may state, relates to the introduction of a plant (*Sorghum sacharatum*) of which more than one crop can be raised in a year; which supplies bread, sugar, and alcohol; food for poultry, and fodder for cattle, and may eventually become one of our important agricultural products'. John MacGillivray, 'The Chinese Sugar Cane -To the Editor', *Sydney Morning Herald,* 10 September 1856, 3.

[62] W.K. Hancock, *Australia* (Brisbane: The Jacaranda Press, 1961), 51.

> … it used to be so often asserted, and was so frequently corroborated by the discovery of additional illustrations, as to have become a current belief – that nature had here chosen a field for the exercise of her creative powers in which she had succeeded in presenting at nearly every step a stumbling block to the further progress of the systematic naturalist who ventured upon the arduous task of arranging the animal kingdom.[63]

He remarked upon the hackneyed allusions to the curious animals of the continent such as the black swan and the 'duck-billed animal' and then continued:

> But, as the mammalia and birds of Australia became better known, many of those supposed anomalous creatures were found to supply in some cases recent and more complete examples of forms previously known only from fragments of fossil remains, and in others to furnish links before wanting in the chain of created beings, tending more and more to enlarge our ideas on such matters, and enable us to comprehend – what as yet we see only by partial and faint glimmerings – that wondrous Unity of Organization which all the works of the Creator display.[64]

MacGillivray then proceeded to give a brief overview of the known zoology of the Australian continent starting with the Mammalia and ending with birds. He excluded Man 'the head of the Animal Kingdom' from his study, leaving the Australian Aboriginal for the ethnologists to describe. Nevertheless, the articles make frequent mention of his own contact with Australian Aborigines and the way in which they interacted with the fauna being examined.

The articles provide an important snapshot of the state of zoological and ornithological researches in Australia in 1856. MacGillivray stated that the most recent information placed the number of Australian Mammalia at 150 distinct species – 16 types of bats, 3 types of seal, 100 pouched animals, 28 rats and 3 monotremes.[65] He stated that there were 645 known species of birds but flagged that this number would grow rapidly once further exploration occurred.[66]

MacGillivray's *Sketches in Australian Zoology* are significant on a range of fronts. The series sets the tone for MacGillivray's future writings for Australian newspapers. The success of this first effort would have encouraged him to continue writing up his observations hoping for future publications. The series provides an insight into the state of MacGillivray's thinking regarding a number of topical issues drawing on his experiences from his long career. He commented, for instance, on geographic distribution of species with reference to bats on the islands of the Western Pacific, writing:

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[63] John MacGillivray, 'Sketches in Australian Zoology-Sketch I', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 June 1856, 2.

[64] *Ibid*

[65] *Ibid.* It is currently thought that Australia has 358 native species. 2 monotremes, around 160 marsupials and approximately 196 placental mammals (including native rodents, bats and marine mammals). MacGillivray excludes the cetacea from his count. Australian Museum Website: http://amonline.net.au/mammals/about/index.htm (accessed 9 October 2010).

[66] Birds Australia lists 867 species in October 2010 – see http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au/birds/faqs.html (accessed 9 October 2010).

> All the islands of the Western Pacific abound with these great fruit-eating bats, and many singular facts regarding their geographical distribution might be mentioned. Thus, while the Tongan, Feejeean, and Samoan groups have each its one distinct and peculiar species, not confined to one island, but scattered over many, San Christoval and Guadalcanar, although in sight of each other, were yet found inhabited by totally different kinds of large bats; and at the little island of Aneiteum, one of the New Hebrides, which is only about eight miles across, we were surprised to find the pteropus of one side perfectly distinct from that of the other.[67]

MacGillivray also commented throughout the series on the impact on various species resulting from trade and colonisation. In one article he wrote:

> In 1843 we found Mosquito Island, in the Hunter, a few miles above Newcastle, absolutely swarming with pademelons and black wallabies, but, two years afterwards, we were informed by our companion of the previous visit, that not one was left.[68]

This reflection on the environmental impact of colonisation was to become a recurring theme throughout MacGillivray's writings. He had already demonstrated some awareness of this in his comments made during the Fly's visit to Raine Island. These articles however demonstrate a broader awareness of the changes being wrought on the flora and fauna of Australia and the surrounding islands.

Another group to feel the devastating effect of colonisation, he argued, was the indigenous population of Van Diemen's Land. They would survive, MacGillivray stated, only by means of half-caste children produced through contact with sealers although he states that this diffusion will mean that they will eventually have 'lost all marks of the parent spring, even now almost dried up'.[69] MacGillivray's writings on this subject echo the prevailing notion that the fate of the Australian Aboriginal people was already sealed.[70] Initially the extinction of the Australian Aboriginal was argued along the lines of divine providence but this would soon be supplanted by arguments using survival of the fittest as an underlying principle.[71]

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[67] MacGillivray, 'Sketches in Australian Zoology-Sketch I', *Sydney Morning Herald,* 6 June 1856, 2.

[68] MacGillivray, 'Sketches in Australian Zoology-Sketch IV', *Sydney Morning Herald,* 19 June 1856, 2.

[69] MacGillivray, 'Sketches in Australian Zoology - Sketch II', *Sydney Morning Herald,* 9 June, 1856, 2.

[70] For discussion see Russell McGregor, *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1997).

The articles are full of personal reminiscences of people and places. MacGillivray recalls a 'long and interesting' talk he had regarding the seals of the Abrolhos, 'which we had with Gilbert many years ago, in the house of poor Strange, another – and at present the last – of the investigators of Australian natural history, who met with an untimely end at the hands of the aborigines of this country.'[72] He mentions the procurement of the first specimen of a rifle bird at Cape York by James Fowler Wilcox, 'of Hunter-street, in whose window it now may be seen'.

The articles also paint a picture of the day-to-day operations of a collector. Often the information is not for the squeamish. MacGillivray's description of procuring seals on the island of St Paul, which he visited on the *Herald* in 1855, gives an idea of the brutality required to form a suitable collection. MacGillivray wrote that:

> We found the first seal by suddenly stumbling upon it, while fast asleep among some loose fragments from the cliff above, and a second and third were roused from their sleep by a charge of No. 5 shot through the neck from a distance of about two yards...[73]

The description then becomes even more alarming.

> ...in one sheltered spot to leeward of a detached rock a seal-mother and her cub were frolicking about, unconscious of our presence. We shall not further detail the means adopted to procure perfect skins of both sexes, to supply a desideratum in the national collection; suffice it to say, that although the expert sealer armed with a long club, wielded in both hands, inflicts instant death by a single blow at the root of the nose, we being provided only with a short bludgeon, found the task by no means an easy one.[74]

In another article he commented on the remarkable tenacity of the kookaburra one of which survived 'the weight of a bag of shot, weighing 28 lbs., placed on its chest for a quarter of an hour, without causing the speedy and humane death we anticipated.'[75]

Sketches in Australian Zoology was just one of MacGillivray's published works during this period. MacGillivray contributed to Cox's and Co annual for 1857 an article titled *Hints on*

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[71] Russell McGregor, 'The Doomed Race: A Scientific Axiom of the Late Nineteenth Century', *Australian Journal of Politics & History*, 39, 1 (1993): 14.

[72] MacGillivray, 'Sketches in Australian Zoology-Sketch II', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 June 1856, 2.

[73] *Ibid*

[74] *Ibid*

[75] MacGillivray, 'Sketches in Australian Zoology-Sketch VI', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 July 1856, 6.

the Preservation of Specimens of Natural History – Intended for Country Residents.[76] This appeared within the section of the Almanac dedicated to 'General information on important subjects'.[77] A number of these papers were reproduced after having been presented to various Sydney Societies. MacGillivray's contribution is noted as an original work intended for use in the Almanac. The publishers of the Almanac wrote in the introduction that they directed the readers' attention 'to the interesting and deeply important papers in this volume, on colonial, mercantile, and agricultural subjects, written by gentlemen in every way fit efficiently to handle their respective topics'.[78]

MacGillivray's paper is a comprehensive catalogue with detailed instructions concerning the correct methods for preserving specimens of mammals, birds, reptiles, fishes, insects, radiate animals, shells and plants. The benefits of doing so, MacGillivray argued, were clear – they included amusement, rational enjoyment and intellectual improvement. 'It need not interfere' MacGillivray stated, 'with the more serious duties of life; it agreeabily [sic] fills up one's leisure hours; every stroll in the garden, or in the bush, or by the seashore, presents the observer with objects of interest, whether vegetable or animal life'.[79] MacGillivray went on to emphasise the role that residents of country areas could play in the continuing documentation of the natural history of New South Wales. In an amusing note given his own background, MacGillivray stated, too often naturalists and explorers from other countries had undertaken this work. Echoing the opinions expressed so many times by his father MacGillivray stated that true naturalists were not content with studying cases of stuffed birds or drawers of insects. Should proper observations be made, he noted that 'a comparison of the results would doubtless evolve many important deductions, bearing upon the Natural History of New South Wales and the adjacent colonies.'[80]

MacGillivray's contribution to the Almanac was also published, by James Waugh, as a small booklet.[81] The publication in booklet form may have been prompted by Sir William Denison who, in 1859, urged the Australian Museum to publish a 'brief set of plain and practical instructions for collecting and preserving the various specimens of Natural

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[76] *Cox and Co. Australian Almanac for the year 1857*, (Sydney: J. Cox and Co., 1857).

[77] *Sydney Morning Herald* 29 April. Reprinted in the *Morton Bay Courier*, 9 May 1857.

[78] *Cox and Co. Australian Almanac for the year 1857*, (Sydney: J. Cox and Co., 1857), Preface.

[79] John MacGillivray, 'Hints on the Preservation of Specimens of Natural History: Intended for Country Residents' in *Cox and Co. Australian Almanac for the year 1857*, (Sydney: J. Cox and Co., 1857), 90. Interestingly E.P Ramsay published a similar booklet in around 1880 titled *Hints on the Preservation of Specimens of Natural History for Museum Purposes.*

[80] John MacGillivray, 'Hints on the Preservation of Specimens of Natural History', 91.

[81] A copy of this booklet, published by Waugh, is held at the Mitchell Library, Sydney. It is not dated. The copy held comes from the library of Helenus Scott uncle to the Scott girls – natural history illustrators.

History for general circulation throughout the Colony'. MacGillivray's contribution to the Almanac was found to cover the ground suitably and Museum officials adopted his booklet and recommendations, although they were never reproduced in a large run.[82]

The picture that emerges of MacGillivray during this period is very different from the image presented in other accounts of his life. The determined drunk, destitute and mixing in the lowest society is a sad and pathetic figure that it has been easy to discount. Instead we find that MacGillivray is actively participating in one of Sydney's key scientific societies and publishing both in the colony's most popular newspaper and an almanac on various subjects. These activities are evidence of a far more complex and interesting character than has previously been acknowledged.

Perhaps MacGillivray would have been more successful had there not still been a major stumbling block in his path. Unlike other figures escaping to the colony, leaving their sins behind them, MacGillivray's chief accusers were still very much present in his new home. The *Herald* was based in Sydney undertaking a survey of Port Jackson from 26 February until 20 December 1857. On 29 May Denham threw a ball – decorating Clarke's Assembly rooms in nautical fashion. Governor Denison and his wife and daughters attended.[83] The *Herald*, her Captain and her officers were a very real presence in the city. A further complication for MacGillivray was that a new officer was appointed to the *Herald* during its Sydney stay, Arthur Onslow. Onslow joined the muster lists on 15 February 1857 and joined the crew on board in Sydney on 4 July 1857. Unfortunately for MacGillivray, Onslow was the grandson of Alexander McLeay and therefore intimately connected with Sydney's scientific elite.[84]

This new link between the officers of the *Herald* and the leading figures in Sydney's scientific community would further depress MacGillivray's chances to enter successfully upon a scientific career in the city. The Macleay family, by this time headed by Alexander's son, William Sharpe Macleay, had successfully worked to gain what amounted to absolute control of the administration of the Australian Museum. The 1853 act of incorporation had cemented their dominance of the institution. The connection between the *Herald*, the

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[82] Robert Etheridge, 'The Australian Museum - Fragments of its Early History', *Records of the Australian Museum*, 12 (1917): 369.

[83] Andrew David, *The Voyage of HMS Herald / to Australia and the South-west Pacific 1852-1861 under the command of Captain Henry Mangles Denham* (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press at the Miegunyah Press, 1995), 269.

[84] Onslow would go on to become a Trustee of the Australian Museum and was active in the dismissal of Gerard Krefft. He also accompanied William Macleay on the *Chevert* expedition to New Guinea in 1874.

Macleays and the Museum was clearly demonstrated when Frederick Raynor and John MacDonald (respectively the Surgeon and Assistant Surgeon of the *Herald* who had taken over collecting duties after MacGillivray's dismissal) were elected as honorary correspondents to the Australian Museum on 6 June 1857 in recognition of their contributions to the collections.[85] The door to the Museum would thus remain firmly closed on MacGillivray.

Despite his small successes MacGillivray essentially failed at this point to establish a profitable career in Sydney. At some point during 1857 or early 1858 he took the decision to try his luck elsewhere. The next record is that of his departure from Sydney for New Caledonia on 11 February 1858. Had MacGillivray waited in Sydney it is possible that he may have followed the same course but for different reasons. Not all of his friends had deserted him. In July 1858 Adam White, of the British Museum, wrote to the naturalist, collector and ornithologist Thomas Campbell Eyton[86] regarding MacGillivray's situation.[87] Eyton had contacted White seeking advice on a suitable way of procuring specimens to add to his, already large, collection. White wrote that he did not have an address for MacGillivray but that if Eyton were to contact Dr [George] Bennett at the Australian Museum he felt sure he would be able to make contact.[88] White wrote, 'I know of no collector to match him. Birds, fish, shells, insects, crustacea all collected with equal discernment admirably skinned, or other wise preserved.' White was not ignorant of MacGillivray's faults. He continued:

> I told you of his unfortunate disposition to take stimulants, an easy habit, fearful in its consequences if not stopped, but readily reformed by firm resolution…[89]

White advised Eyton that if he were to employ MacGillivray as a collector in the 'New Hebrides, or some of those islands all about New Guinea and between and about it and the north of New Zealand, I am sure Sir, you would be rewarded.' White felt that the job would benefit MacGillivray in ways other than purely financial. He told Eyton that:

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[85] Australian Museum Archives, AM MSS B25.57.2 and B.25.57.3 see also Etheridge, 'The Australian Museum - Fragments of Its early history', 385.

[86] In 1855 Eyton had come into possession of the family estate. He set up a large Museum of birds skins and skeletons – one of the finest collections in Europe.

[87] White to Eyton, 24 July 1858, Thomas Eyton Papers, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, B EY83.

[88] Bennett was no longer curator but was a trustee from 1853-1874.

[89] White to Eyton, 24 July 1858, Thomas Eyton Papers, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, B EY83.

> A hint to him to take fewer stimulants might lead him with God's blessing (and the promised help) to become an altered character. I am sure that the author of the Rarer British Birds and Anatidae would be glad to see a clever fellow naturalist reformed and sending, as he used to send when on "the Fly" and "Rattlesnake" such noble collections...[90]

As it happened, by the time Eyton received White's letter MacGillivray was already working in New Caledonia - collecting, travelling, observing. MacGillivray had decided on a new course of action, a course that steered him into the area suggested by White but on his own terms and under his own steam. He would not return to Australia for three eventful years.

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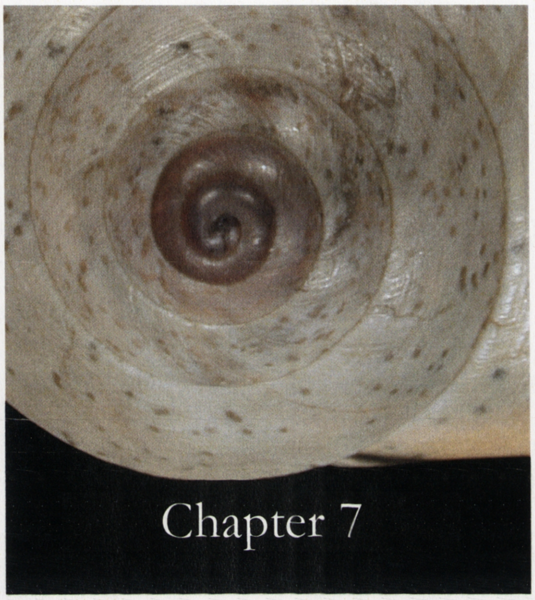
[90] *Ibid*



Chapter 7

On Spec
February 1858 – July 1860

John MacGillivray had been resident almost three years in Australia before he judged it best to seek his fortune elsewhere. His move away from Australia was significant. As we have seen, in the years immediately following his dramatic dismissal from HMS *Herald* there is evidence to show that MacGillivray made attempts to enter the gentlemanly world of science in Sydney. His move to leave the country demonstrates his failure to gain sufficient support to succeed, or at least to make a viable living. Had he successfully manoeuvred himself into Sydney's scientific circles or gained the patronage of figures such as the Macleay family of Elizabeth Bay, he would certainly have had greater success in rebuilding a career in his newly adopted country. As it was he was forced to look further afield in order to re-establish his reputation and to carve out a new life using whatever talents and knowledge he was able to muster. Luckily for MacGillivray his talents and knowledge were broad and his taste for adventure not lacking. He took a risk and struck out in a new direction – he boarded the appropriately named brig *Spec* and sailed on 11 February 1858 bound for New Caledonia.[1]

MacGillivray's life during this period becomes more difficult to piece together. His wanderings require reconstruction based on fragments, scraps, whispers, rumours and hearsay. His life becomes somewhat mysterious; he straddles at times uncomfortable worlds, taking on new roles and unusual (at times even disreputable) associates.

The most enlightening sources for the period are MacGillivray's own writings about his various activities which were published in the Sydney press. As has been demonstrated in previous chapters, MacGillivray was actively engaged with the Sydney press. His articles from this period are perhaps his most significant contribution in this regard. The three series of articles examined in this chapter are *Reminiscences of New Caledonia*, six articles published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (between 21 March – 30 March 1860), *Wanderings in Tropical Australia*, eleven articles also published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (between 4 January – 1 April 1862); and *Scraps from Journals in the South West Pacific*, nine articles published in the *Empire* (between 7 April and 20 May 1864).[2] These articles provide an intriguing glimpse into both the way in which MacGillivray saw himself during this period and the events occurring around him.

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[1] 'Shipping', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 February 1858, 4.

[2] Although MacGillivray's *Wanderings* and *Scraps* have been identified before *Reminiscences of New Caledonia* has not previously been identified as being authored by him.

The tone of the articles is revealing: they are tales of the colonial frontier. MacGillivray is living life on the edge – on the edge of civilization, on the edge of convention, accepted morality, science, and geography. The frontier was a confronting and violent place and this is reflected in MacGillivray's writings. The material is not related to the reader as adventure, although the events are often dramatic. The prose is matter-of-fact - not colourless, but more in the style of an exposé than a thrilling tale. The incidents are often shocking, brutal, violent and troubling to modern readers. MacGillivray presents them without overt emotion. His tone conveys an element of pride in his ability to survive in this frontier world. While not necessarily always presented with intent to shock, he certainly holds little back. It appears that he enjoys presenting himself as tough enough to mix it with these 'savages' the worst of whom, in MacGillivray's opinion it would seem, were white.[3]

The period covered by the articles clearly marks a shift in MacGillivray's career toward a less structured phase in which he employed an opportunistic existence taking up positions as, when and where they arose. Some authors, including MacGillivray himself,[4] have said that he 'turned sandalwooder' during this time.[5] Certainly the sandalwood trade played a major role in his activities. MacGillivray's description of some of the sandalwood traders could well describe himself during the period. Of them he wrote:

> Many of these were restless and sometimes reckless, daring men, fond of change and excitement, hard-working at times, and making light of hardships, privations, and danger. …A few made considerable sums of money, which very seldom, however, profited them much; while others lost their all, including life itself.[6]

Less well documented than his sandalwooding activities is his continuing work as a naturalist and collector, evident from his natural history notebook, contributions to scientific journals and his few extant letters.

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[3] This was a common point of view. Steve Mullins comments that 'They generally shared the view common amongst the educated classes of Britain that native attacks were almost invariably the result of European provocation'. Steve Mullins, *Torres Strait: A History of Colonial Occupation and Culture Contact 1864-1897* (Rockhampton: Central Queensland University Press, 1994), 17.

[4] John MacGillivray, 'Scraps from Journals in the South West Pacific - no.VIII – Eramanga and its Sandalwooders', *Empire* (Sydney), 20 July 1864, 8.

[5] Dorothy Shineberg, *They Came for Sandalwood: a study of the sandalwood trade in the south-west Pacific*, 1830-1865 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press; London, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 196.

[6] MacGillivray, 'Scraps - no.VIII, *Empire* (Sydney), 20 July 1864, 8.

For three years MacGillivray essentially turned entrepreneur. An examination of the period and his observations offers a slice of life in the south-west pacific unlike any other. Through his accounts we glimpse some of the major historic themes, events, people and places from an intriguing angle. MacGillivray's writings are particularly valuable as they come from an observer relatively unaligned to either the missionary cause or the sandalwood trade – the two dominant (and often opposing) forces in the existing historiography of the period. MacGillivray managed to straddle both the missionary and trader worlds. He was neither missionary nor, in truth, much of a sandalwood trader – but was on unusually good terms with both. He had no obvious mission to pursue; no real agenda to promote (apart from consistently anti-French sentiments). His observations offer a unique perspective on this volatile and unusual world.

This period also marks a crucial time in MacGillivray's career during which he essentially reinvented himself. For the first time he operated outside the intricate, official network of natural history collecting. He had become an outsider, a free agent, able to pursue whatever opportunities arose in the way of travel and employment. MacGillivray made the most of this freedom, travelling extensively throughout the region. Despite his failures and failings MacGillivray was in a good position to exploit his vast knowledge of this area of Australia and the south-west pacific in order to establish himself as a private collector and naturalist. While MacGillivray faced many new difficulties as he struck out on his own, he would also have felt a certain amount of liberation from the constraints of acting from within the discipline and requirements of British surveying vessels. One of the greatest frustrations of naturalists on board such a vessel was the inability to land where and when he wanted. The official naturalist was forced to wait and work patiently around the requirements and requests of his commanding officers. This difficulty was amply demonstrated throughout the voyage of the *Rattlesnake*. At times precious opportunities to land and explore slipped by after months of waiting and hoping. Acting independently provided a new freedom and autonomy and perhaps better suited MacGillivray's temperament than his alternative at this point - having to ingratiate himself with the dominant forces within Sydney's gentlemanly scientific collectors.

The other major source for the period apart from MacGillivray's journalistic efforts is his 'natural history notebook' found in his rooms after his death. The notebook covers the period c1856-1866. This small book is a scrappy, fragmentary and somewhat intriguing source. It records business transactions, family history information, publications lists, notes on measures and preserving techniques and, importantly, a single page which gives a brief chronology of his movements from June 1856 until 1863. In terse style MacGillivray lists his movements as follows:

> 1858. Went to Port de France in Feb. Sept went to Eramanga and Aneiteum.
> 1859. Tana, Eramanga, Aneiteum. Sept went to Eramanga in Cordelia - returned same year in Vivid. Windhover from Aneiteum to Eramanga.
> 1860. April went to Eramanga – Port de France in Bluebell. Julia Percy to Lizard Island.
> 1861. Torres Strait Cr. December returned to Sydney via Rockhampton.[7]

The list is absurdly brief given the number of incidents and adventures which occurred in each place. This chapter will attempt to fill out the first half of this chronology, piece together the fragments, examine his wanderings and provide a picture of the new life MacGillivray was creating.

MacGillivray's first venture took place in New Caledonia. The country of New Caledonia is made up of the main island, Grande Terre, the Loyalty Island group of Uvea, Lifu and Mare and several smaller islands including the Isle of Pines. The climate is tropical, the main island mountainous and the region well known for its botanical richness and significance. It is impossible to know precisely why MacGillivray chose New Caledonia as the first base for his south-west pacific venture. Perhaps, like Captain James Cook who sighted and named the main island in 1774, he hoped it might stir memories of home, but it is more probable that it was practical reasoning that took him this direction. MacGillivray was familiar with the area, having recently visited the Isle of Pines during the voyage of the *Herald*. The *Herald* had in fact played an interesting part in the history of the French annexation of New Caledonia, echoes of which are present in MacGillivray's scraps, wanderings and reminiscences from the period.

At the end of September 1853 the *Herald* had been at anchor in Port de Vao (Captain Denham proposed the name of Port Albert) at the Isle of Pines. The *Herald* had commenced its detailed survey of the island and its reefs as part of its ongoing survey work. On 24 September France realised one of Britain's and her colonies' worst fears and took possession of New Caledonia, hoisting their flag at Balade and claiming the territory in the name of the Emperor Napoleon III. The French in New Caledonia were still celebrating their latest acquisition when one of the French Roman Catholic priests based on the island, Father Montrouzier, brought them alarming news. A British man-of-war, he reported, was in the area and was intending a visit to New Caledonia. Father Montrouzier had been advised on the movements of the *Herald* in a letter from William Sharp Macleay with whom he occasionally traded specimens of natural history.[8] The French immediately dispatched a steamer, *Le Phoqué* to the Isle of Pines hoping that they were not too late to claim the territory before the British.

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[7] John MacGillivray, *Natural History Notebook 1855-66*, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, ML/B944.

The events of the following days were an interesting play of suspicion, disguise and deceit. When Denham enquired the reason for *Le Phoqué's* visit to the Isle of Pines he was told that it was there to visit the French missionaries stationed on the island. These missionaries, MacGillivray noted in his journal, seemed to be far more interested in the political rather than the spiritual wellbeing of the locals.[9] Denham was not aware that the French Commander-in-Chief of the region, Rear Admiral Febvrier Despointes, was also on board *Le Phoqué*, the fact being concealed by the French failing to display his flag. The Admiral went ashore on the 29 September in civilian clothes and, after negotiations with the local king, Wendagu[10], the French flag was hoisted at the site of the mission. All of this proceeded without Denham's knowledge. *Le Phoqué* steamed away on 1 October with the British still ignorant of the momentous events that had occurred under their noses.[11]

MacGillivray's *Herald* journal contains an account of this incident with details added at a later date once the situation became clearer to the parties involved. When writing the *Scraps* series in 1864 MacGillivray dedicated an entire article to the episode. His residual bitterness toward Denham is clear and the article provided a good opportunity to publicly criticise his former Captain for his lack of action and perception. The French, MacGillivray stated, needn't have had any worries about the presence of the *Herald* as:

> There was no one at the Isle of Pines, who would have prevented him from taking possession, albeit Britain might through her representative have protested against it and put in a better claim than France, grounded as it was on priority of discovery by Captain Cook. No man of energy was there like the late Owen Stanley, who, when in command of a little "ten-tun'coffin," without special instructions, on his own "responsibility" – that bugbear of the weak, time-serving, and vacillating minds – by an act of characteristic energy and decision, not merely saved the Middle Island of New

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[8] Andrew David, *The Voyage of HMS Herald / to Australia and the South-west Pacific 1852-1861 under the command of Captain Henry Mangles Denham* (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press at the Miegunyah Press, 1995), 40.

[9] John MacGillivray, *Voyage of H.M.S. Herald under the command of Captain H. Mangles Denham* R.N., *being private Journal kept by John MacGillivray, naturalist, 21 February 1852 - January 1855.* (London: A.L. Faber Microfilm Library, [19--]), 1 October 1853.

[10] Throughout this chapter I have used MacGillivray's titles and names. These vary considerably from source to source – particularly when dealing with islanders.

[11] While Denham was obviously disappointed and embarrassed about these events it is not true, as has been stated, that he 'blew his brains out' on his return to Sydney. See R.H. Compton, 'New Caledonia and the Isle of Pines', *The Geographical Journal*, 49, 2 (1917): 82.

> Zealand from being taken possession of by a French expedition provided with emigrants and all the material for forming a settlement, but was the means of its being added to the colonial empire.[12]

In the same article MacGillivray related his own midnight interview with the chief, Wendagu, conducted while he was a guest in his house. The French, he stated, had established complete control over the king and had, according to the king, promised him £100 per annum if he allowed them to take possession of the island.[13] When the news of French possession did reach Sydney there was considerable feeling that Britain had, in this instance, let the colony down by not securing New Caledonia first. Those in the colony as well as Commanders of vessels in Her Majesty's navy had made representations to the British government urging action on the issue of colonisation of New Caledonia but all had been ignored, the editorial in the SMH stated. Further outrage was occasioned by the idea that a rival nation would found a convict settlement in the region so soon after the 'withering curse of convictism' had been removed from Australian shores.[14]

While all of these political machinations were taking place in 1853, MacGillivray was busy investigating the natural history of the Isle of Pines. In particular he spent a considerable amount of time looking into a tree, the sandalwood. At the time of the *Herald's* visit there were at least two separate sandalwooding stations present on the island. The stations were owned by the dominant forces in the sandalwood trade – James Paddon and Robert Towns. MacGillivray spent some time during voyage on the *Herald* examining and collecting specimens of sandalwood. At the Isle of Pines he consulted with Mr Hill then operating as manager for Towns. He also took the time to speak with Mr Abbey and Mr Underwood (previously manager at Aneityum) who managed Paddon's operations. Underwood showed MacGillivray a store of sandalwood from an island that had not been previously known to produce the tree. The location was disclosed to MacGillivray privately and Underwood promised to obtain specimens of the tree to add to MacGillivray's collection. MacGillivray recorded in his journal that he believed that it might prove to be a new species.[15] From his comments and observations from this period it is clear that MacGillivray gained a good knowledge of the workings of the industry and the major figures involved.

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[12] John MacGillivray, 'Scraps from Journals in the South West Pacific - no.IV – About the Isle of Pines', *Empire* (Sydney), 15 April 1864, 8.
[13] *Ibid*
[14] 'The French in New Caledonia', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 November 1853, 4.
[15] John MacGillivray, *Voyage of H.M.S. Herald, Private Journal*, 13 December 1853.

Between 1855 and 1857 when resident in Sydney, MacGillivray drew on this knowledge and experience for his papers on sandalwood production delivered to the Horticultural Improvement Society of New South Wales. Although they concentrated on the botanical nature of the wood, the papers demonstrate his knowledge of, and interest in, the state of the trade. His published article '*Some remarks on the sandalwood of the south sea islands*' makes specific reference to Captain Paddon's bases at Tana and the Isle of Pines.[16]

When MacGillivray set out for New Caledonia in 1858 this knowledge was to prove invaluable. For the next three years his life would intertwine with some of the key figures in the sandalwood industry. His movements and actions were in large part governed by the activities of the sandalwood traders. In particular MacGillivray became involved with Captain James Paddon and his associates.

It would have been impossible for anyone travelling the south-west Pacific in the second half of the nineteenth century not to have been aware of Captain James Paddon and his trading activities. Paddon was one of the most influential white settlers in the south-west pacific and had been trading sandalwood and other commodities since the early 1840s. Unlike other traders and operators who were based in Australia, Paddon lived and operated out of his depot stations on the islands of Aneityum, Tana, Eromanga, the Isle of Pines and New Caledonia.

The records concerning Paddon's life are surprisingly sparse for such a significant figure. As with most information about the sandalwood trade in the south-west Pacific Dorothy Shineberg's magnificent work, *They Came for Sandalwood*, provides the best picture of his life and activities. He was born in England around 1812. While working on vessels trading in China in the early 1840s (missionaries later alleged that he was running opium at the time), he observed a load of sandalwood being unloaded that had arrived from an island in the south-west Pacific. Convinced that the region presented a lucrative opportunity as yet untapped, he entered into a partnership with a merchant at Canton, Heerjeebhoy Rustomjee, with a plan to set up a south-west Pacific island station.[17] Paddon established his first base on the island of Aneityum in January 1844.[18]

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[16] John MacGillivray, 'Some remarks on the sandalwood of the south sea islands' in Joseph Dyer (ed), *Sydney Magazine of Science and Art*, Vol. 2 (Sydney: James W. Waugh: 1859), 196.

[17] Shineberg, *They Came for Sandalwood*, 98.

[18] *Ibid*, 100.

Aneityum is the southernmost island of the Vanuatu archipelago. The island is small (162 sq km) and yet it has played a significant role in the history of the region having been a major centre of both missionary and sandalwooding activity. Once in Aneityum, Paddon bought the tiny island of Inyeuc in Anelgauhat harbour for an axe, a rug and a string of beads and set about building his settlement.[19] Aneityum was to be his home for the next eight years.

The reason for Paddon's eventual departure from Aneityum was probably chiefly related to the exhaustion of sandalwood on the island. Paddon's home had, however become less comfortable for him since 29 July 1848 with the arrival of the Presbyterian Church of Novia Scotia missionary, Reverend John Geddie. Despite initial goodwill on both sides, four years into their dual occupancy the island proved too small to hold both of them. Geddie was joined by another missionary, John Inglis, in 1852 who came as a missionary for the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

The conflict between Paddon and Geddie serves as a template for the conflict that occurred between sandalwood traders and missionaries throughout the region during the 1840s-1860s. The aims and outlook of missionary and sandalwood trader were often at odds. Sandalwood traders complained that the missionaries poisoned the minds of the 'natives' against them and made it far harder to recruit labour for their stations. Missionaries deplored the activities of sandalwood traders fearing that they corrupted the 'natives' by encouraging prostitution, tobacco use and violence. Many of the atrocities committed by sandalwood crews were documented and publicised by missionaries highlighting the barbarity of the trade. Naval officers and colonial officials also participated in the documentation of offences deploring the activities of the white traders on the fringes of 'civilized' society. The picture that was created of the sandalwood industry was and is largely the product of such writings. Missionaries relied on their writing to encourage contributions and support for their work in the islands. By comparison, sandalwood traders wrote very little about their thoughts and experiences. This disparity must be taken into account when considering the image of the sandalwood trade from the period.[20]

These issues were at the heart of the conflict between Geddie and Paddon. Geddie felt that he had incurred the hatred of the sandalwood traders chiefly due to his success in protecting the virtue of the 'native maidens of the island'.[21] Paddon and Underwood complained to Bishop Selwyn, the Bishop of New Zealand, who visited the island on a number of occasions, that Geddie had convinced his converts not to sell food to the sandalwood stations, a claim that Geddie denied.[22] Bishop Selwyn was a figure well regarded by sandalwood traders and missionaries throughout the region. Paddon's station manager Underwood, who wrote disparagingly of Geddie as 'old blue nose', wrote to Towns of his relief to be visited by Selwyn or Bishop Patterson (the first Bishop of Melanesia) rather than having to deal with Inglis or Geddie as '...the fact is the former are gentlemen and the latter snobs...[23]

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[19] *Ibid*

[20] Jane Samson, *Imperial Benevolence: making British authority in the Pacific Islands* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), 93.

Outright conflict between Geddie and Paddon flared in 1851. In a dramatic incident on an evening in November Geddie's house was set alight. Geddie and his wife Charlotte were fortunate to escape without injury. Geddie was convinced that Paddon had told the Aneityum people to undertake the act. He wrote in his journal that:

> It appears that Capt. Paddon has been telling the heathen people, that he must leave the island because I am on it, and they will have no more tobacco, to the use of which they are slaves. It was to avert this calamity that the deluded natives made their attempt to rid the island of me. These wicked foreigners are far less manly than the natives whom they despise for they are ever exciting them to deeds which they dare not perpetrate themselves.[24]

Two days later the Geddies encountered Paddon and Underwood. Paddon left no account of the confrontation. However it is evident from Geddie's account that it was a violent argument:

> Capt. Paddon came to me trembling with rage and carrying a large pistol. He spoke to me in a most boisterous manner and his language to Mrs Geddie was vile...It was evident from the strain of his talk that we had been too successful among the natives and that he and his associates were smarting under the public opinion which was forming against their wickedness....Underwood assisted his employer in the abuse of Mrs Geddie and myself, and it is hard to say which of them excelled in it. They were both at home in the language of Billingsgate and they added to this much Botany Bay slang which I have not heard elsewhere.[25]

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[21] John Geddie, *Misi Gete : John Geddie, pioneer missionary to the New Hebrides* [edited by] R.S. Miller (Launceston, Tas. : Presbyterian Church of Tasmania, 1975), 95.

[22] *Ibid*

[23] Underwood to Towns, Anatam, 7 January 1863, Robert Towns & Co. Papers, 1856-1881,Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, MS307, 189a.

[24] Geddie, *Misi Gete,* 109.

[25] *Ibid,* 106-107.

Paddon announced his intention to leave the island and was true to his word, departing in January 1852. In the following two years Paddon set up stations on the island of Tana, the Isle of Pines and Eromanga. It was at his station in Tana in 1854 that MacGillivray would have encountered Paddon in person for the first time. Paddon greeted the *Herald* on her entry into Port Resolution. It was shortly after this encounter Paddon made his move to establish Port de France (now Noumea) in New Caledonia as his permanent station and home.

New Caledonia was Paddon's major base for the remainder of his life although he maintained operations among the islands and was a regular visitor to his other stations. Paddon brought large numbers of settlers to New Caledonia and remains a significant figure in the island's history. In the mid 1850s when Paddon advertised in the Sydney press attempting to lure settlers to work in his various enterprises it is said that he proclaimed that New Caledonia was, 'The country where great tracts of land are available: where bureaucrats and office-seekers don't exist.'[26]

This type of prospect would have appealed to MacGillivray who had by this time amply demonstrated a lack of affection for authority. In 1856 the history of the sandalwood trade took a significant turn. Following his move to New Caledonia, Paddon was forced to come to a business relationship with his chief competitor in island trade, Robert Towns. Unlike Paddon, Towns never based himself in the islands – he was a leading figure in Sydney business circles. Sandalwood was only one of Towns' many interests. He had entered the trade in spectacular fashion with his first sandalwood shipment hitting the China market at exactly the right moment. Towns continued to hope that he would repeat this remarkable success with future shipments.[27]

Paddon had always resented Towns' entry into a market he saw as his own. The agreement that was eventually negotiated between the pair was forged out of necessity rather than desire and had as its basis a high degree of mutual distrust and antipathy. Establishing a clear picture of the trade in this period becomes increasingly difficult as the financial arrangements and entanglements become exceedingly complex. Paddon also entered into a partnership with Captain Charles Edwards– with whom MacGillivray had significant contact on the island of Eromanga.[28] As the supply of sandalwood began to dwindle and demand lessened, the trade also become increasingly difficult to maintain as a viable business.

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[26] 'Trader helped lure Australian settlers to New Caledonia', Historical feature, *Daily Mirror*, 26 April 1985, 30.
[27] Shineberg, *They Came for Sandalwood*, 110.

By the late 1850s Paddon had acquired substantial holdings in New Caledonia and had imported significant numbers of cattle, running them on large ranches. His settlement at Port de France was a hive of activity. He had installed a large steam engine to drive different machines for various trades and had a lime-kiln in operation. He employed carpenters, masons, blacksmiths and ship builders with a workforce estimated at almost 300 men.[29] Paddon took full advantage of the French settlement in New Caledonia and his business boomed when he established himself as a trader supplying the needs of the French as well as his own recruited colonists. In 1858 Paddon received 60,000 francs and a grant of four thousand hectares of land near Paita from the French government in return for his holdings around Port de France, which were to be used as a penal settlement.

This was the world into which MacGillivray stepped when he disembarked from his voyage on the Paddon owned brig, *Spec.* It was a time of tension in New Caledonia with the French authorities testing their powers on the island and with Paddon often acting as a mediator with the local population. Paddon himself was however causing significant tensions of his own as his cattle operations took up more and more land, displacing the local population. Tensions would soon boil over with open conflict between Paddon and the French authorities.

It was, however, natural rather than political history that filled MacGillivray's thoughts as he stepped ashore in this land of zoological, botanical, ethnographic and ornithological riches in 1858. Within three months of his arrival in New Caledonia he made his first real move to re-enter the world of official collecting with a contribution to the *Annals and Magazine of Natural History.* Writing a brief note from Port de France, New Caledonia in May 1858, MacGillivray begged to bring to the attention to his colleagues an exciting discovery, a new species of grass finch. MacGillivray proposed the name *Poëphila paddoni*:

> …in honour of Capt. James Paddon, –not because he has done so much in promoting civilization among the islands of the S.W. Pacific, but because he has at

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[28] Later Edwards would assist William Sharpe Macleay on the 1875 *Chevert* expedition to New Guinea – Australia's first home grown scientific voyage to a foreign country.

[29] Henry Caporn, *The early history of New Caledonia,* (1893), National Library of Australia, NLA MS9448.

> all times cordially assisted Botanists and other Naturalists who, like myself, have visited his stations at Aneiteum, Tana, the Isle of Pines, and New Caledonia.[30]

MacGillivray later described the finch as the most beautiful of all the New Caledonian birds – glowing with metallic green and scarlet.[31] The honour that he paid to Paddon in naming this discovery for him is a measure of the high regard and deep respect for the trader evident in all his writings from this period. MacGillivray's description of Paddon's finch is also evidence that, whatever else he was to attempt in the form of employment, collecting was still central to his thoughts and activities. Unfortunately for MacGillivray (and his friend Paddon) he had described a specimen already well known to science.[32] This is a mistake he would have been unlikely to make had he not been so physically and intellectually isolated. Specimens in the Natural History Museum show that he collected on the Isle of Nu on 20 April and Isle of Pines on 7 June 1858. As with his contribution to the *Annals* these specimens provide further evidence that MacGillivray was working, perhaps tentatively, but with a certain success at re-establishing his links to the now distant, respected and respectable world of scientific collecting.[33]

MacGillivray was resident in New Caledonia for approximately eight months, from his arrival in February 1858 until September of the same year. All that has been previously known about MacGillivray's departure from Australia was that he was headed for New Caledonia. Exactly where he went and what he did while he was there remained a mystery. MacGillivray's *Reminiscences of New Caledonia* paint a far fuller picture of the months he was resident on the island and also provide a fascinating insight into the situation in New Caledonia in this volatile period. These articles are a significant addition to our knowledge of MacGillivray's life and travels. They are not mentioned in the list of publications in his 'natural history notebook' and no published account of his life has included or referred to them. The series of six articles appear to have been submitted to the *SMH* during his residence at Aneityum in 1860. In a letter to his former shipmate James Fowler Wilcox in

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[30] John MacGillivray, 'Description of a new species of Grass Finch from New Caledonia'. *Ann. Mag. Nat. Hist.*, Ser. 3, Vol. ii., October (1858): 263-264.

[31] John MacGillivray, 'Reminiscences of New Caledonia - no.VI', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 March 1860, 3.

[32] The *Ibis* for 1859 states that: 'Out of the many species of birds in New Caledonia, Mr MacGillivray has unfortunately selected one of the few, which are already known to the scientific world, to describe as new. As Dr Hartlaub has shown in a recent communication to the Zoological Society, *Poephila paddoni* was discovered in New Caledonia as long ago as the year 1774 by the Forsters, who accompanied Capt. Cook in his second voyage. It is described and figured by Latham in his 'Synopsis" (Vol. iii, 287) as the 'Parrot Finch' which name was latinized by Gmelin into *Fringilla psittacea.* It belongs strictly to the genus Erythrura. *Ibis*, 1 (1859).

[33] Richard Bowdler Sharpe, *Catalogue of the Passeriformes or perching birds in the collection of the British Museum, Ciclomorphae, Part 1* (London: printed by order of the Trustees, British Museum, 1879), 223. *Artamides cadeonicus*, a. male im. Sk. Isle of Pines, New Caledonia, 7 June 1858. *Pseudogerygone flavilateralis*, Ad sk. Island of Nu, New Caledonia April 20 1858 (type).

August 1860 he told him to look out for the series on 'Caledonia', which will be signed 'JM'.[34]

It would appear from the account given in his description of *Poëphila paddoni* that he initially based himself at Paddon's station at Port de France, making collecting trips around the area until July. In that month MacGillivray '...being desirous of seeing a little of the interior of New Caledonia' and '...time being no object' set out on a short journey to cross the island between Port St Vincent on the west coast and Kanala on the east coast.[35] This journey formed the basis of his *Reminiscences of New Caledonia.* The account of MacGillivray's journey shows that his trip was made with the intention of conducting further collecting work as well as giving him a chance to observe in more detail the customs and ceremonies of the native population of New Caledonia.

MacGillivray employed three men from Kanala to accompany him on this short journey across the island, which he estimated could be completed in a single day by someone in haste. The party set off from Port de France on 19 July 1858. The group took two days to trek to Port St Vincent as they were unable to find a boat able to take them in that direction. The trip across to Kanala took five days. During the excursion MacGillivray grasped the opportunity to meet various tribes, sample local produce, visit a range of villages and witness a number of ceremonies. All of these adventures and encounters are recounted in his articles to satisfy what MacGillivray termed the 'Sydney resident's curiosity about New Caledonia and its people'.[36]

The articles read as an abridged version of his shipboard journals. MacGillivray noted and observed all that occurred around him – the people, the plants, the animals. His curiosity was alive and well. This three-week journey across the island yielded ample material for his articles and provided a glimpse into the state of affairs in New Caledonia at the time. MacGillivray commented that there would be plenty of work in the region for a collecting botanist and took the opportunity to collect a range of specimens during this excursion. His collecting had to contend with many difficulties, not the least of which was his guide's desire for the specimens to be put to alternate uses:

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[34] MacGillivray to Wilcox, 16 January 1860, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, ML Doc169b.
[35] John MacGillivray, 'Reminiscences of New Caledonia-I', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 March 1860, 3.
[36] *Ibid*

> An owl, which was shot from a teatree, was so very expeditiously plucked by my companions – who carefully saved the feathers, telling me they are much prized at Kanala – that although anxious to secure it uninjured for a specimen, the short time I took in reloading gave them the start of me.[37]

This owl was one of a number of victims of MacGillivray's three-barrelled gun 'the fame of which had already spread over the immediate neighbourhood…'.[38] MacGillivray gave demonstrations of this, one of his prized possessions, throughout his travels in New Caledonia and put it to practical use in securing food as well as specimens. After the trek of five days the party arrived at the harbour in Kanala on 23 July just in time to witness the breaking up of Captain Paddon's station on the shore of a bay called Nanu. The station was being abandoned following a fierce hurricane, which had struck at the beginning of the year on 30 January.

Throughout his travels MacGillivray found the people of New Caledonia to be remarkably friendly and open. He put this down to his association with Paddon who, he states, was held in high regard by everyone on the island of New Caledonia as well as to '…Baratus having carefully informed the people he met, that I was not a "man ever-wee,"[39] but a "man English."'[40] Some years later he advised John Inglis that the 'natives' of New Caledonia so disliked the French that despite the fact that they were inveterate cannibals if a Frenchmen were killed they 'would neither cook him nor eat him!'[41] *Reminiscences* are full of detail of the people of New Caledonia. As with all of his travels MacGillivray showed his adventurous spirit when it came to experimenting with local fare happily including a description of the unusual feast of locust. These grasshoppers met with his approval:

> …I thought them very palatable food, somewhat resembling shrimps in taste; and if the spiders, on which the New Caledonians are said occasionally to feast, are only half as good, I would by no means condemn their taste.[42]

However he could not recommend the unctuous clay occasionally eaten by New Caledonians and also eaten in Fiji and elsewhere in the Pacific.

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[37] *Ibid*

[38] John MacGillivray, 'Reminiscences of New Caledonia-II', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 March 1860, 3.

[39] French. MacGillivray's *Herald Journal* records 'these "wee-wees" (oui! oui!) were disliked on account of their hard dealings and their miserable payments for labour…'. John MacGillivray, *Voyage of H.M.S. Herald, Private Journal*, 29 September 1853.

[40] MacGillivray, 'Reminiscences of New Caledonia-VI', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 March 1860, 3.

[41] John Inglis, *In the New Hebrides: Reminiscences of Missionary Life and Work* (London: T Nelson & Sons, 1887), 229-230.

[42] MacGillivray, 'Reminiscences of New Caledonia-II', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 March 1860, 3.

Items for trade were constantly required as they passed through each village or settlement. Pipes and tobacco were the main items requested and were given in exchange for sugar cane and yams. By the end of the journey demand for these items had been so great that MacGillivray's supplies had been exhausted. MacGillivray noted that he did receive one request for percussion caps from a chief but he declined to trade on the basis that he felt that the chief was too friendly with the French authorities for his liking and that he had no desire to be subjected to ten years' involuntary residence at Tahiti.[43]

MacGillivray vividly described two ceremonies observed during his journey. These 'kassi', he noted, were conducted as part of a harvest festival. His interest in the people was intense and he took copious notes as he observed the proceedings. These large ceremonies involved thousands of participants. He attended the second ceremony along with two other Europeans including the one settler of the Kanala area M. Pannetrat who had been invited to bring the "Man Sydney" along with him. Pannetrat had been resident in the Kanala district since 1855 and had major landholdings in the area.[44] MacGillivray watched, fascinated as a group of 800 women danced:

> Perhaps their numbers inspired additional confidence, for I was warned off by a fussy piece of feminine antiquity, with a very shrill voice, so closed my notebook, lit my pipe, and sneaked with affected composure to a place of safety among the men…[45]

MacGillivray found the men's dancing a powerful sight.

> The heavy tread of five or six hundred men in a dense mass all stamping in unison; the accompanying *ssh-ssh* of as many voices; the nodding of the plumes, and the ever hanging white, red, and blue head-dresses distracting the eye amidst the forest of spears, and uplifted clubs and tomahawks, produced a very striking effect…[46]

After a fortnight's stay at Kanala MacGillivray set out on 5 August to return to the other side of the island. During his travels he observed parakeets he felt were probably unknown to naturalists but failed to collect specimens. He eventually arrived at the small settlement of Wemwei about 18 miles from Port St Vincent. After a number of delays he managed to get a canoe to carry him back to Captain Paddon's cattle station on one of the islands in Port St Vincent. He arrived late on 8 August and settled back into what he described as his

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[43] MacGillivray, 'Reminiscences of New Caledonia-I', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 March 1860, 3.
[44] Henry Caporn, *The early history of New Caledonia*, (1893), Manuscript, National Library of Australia, NLA MS9448.
[45] John MacGillivray, 'Reminiscences of New Caledonia-V', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 March 1860, 3.
[46] *Ibid*

'old quarters' in Paddon's station to await a boat to take him the twenty-five miles back to Port de France.

As well as describing his travels in the interior MacGillivray used his *Reminiscences* to describe the state of affairs in New Caledonia including comments on the impact of the sandalwood trade (a theme he would take up for more energetically in later publications) as well as the impact of French administration on the island and its people.

MacGillivray described one the most infamous of the outrages committed by sandalwood traders in the Kanala area. He advised his Sydney readers that a different account of the same event was to be found in William Gill's work 'Gems from the Coral Islands'[47]:

> ...a book which, I regret to say abounds in inaccuracies, for otherwise it meets with my most cordial approval, and hearty concurrence in its principal object – the advancement of the Protestant missionary cause. But I cannot help thinking that, as a mere passing visitor while in the South-West pacific, the credulity of the well-meaning author has often been imposed on.[48]

MacGillivray went on to give an account of Captain John Oliver[49] and the murder of a New Caledonian chief. Oliver had entered into a local conflict agreeing to capture a neighbouring chief for Kai, the chief at Kanala in exchange for a load of sandalwood. He and his crew captured the Nikete chief and one other native by inviting them on board the vessel and drugging them with laudanum. The chief's companion attempted to escape and was killed. The pair, one alive, one dead was duly delivered to Kanala where the chief was killed and the pair was eaten. The Kanala chief then short-changed Oliver by providing only a fraction of the agreed payment of sandalwood. Despite calls from Sydney for Oliver to be charged for this outrage he was never held to account. MacGillivray states that he was suddenly called before a higher tribunal when he was killed in 1859.

This particular incident is significant for the insight it provides into the intricacies of interaction between sandalwood traders and native populations. The encounters related by missionary and other sources often stress the exploitation of native populations in terms of labour, resources and sexual degradation. MacGillivray states that Kai was aware of the benefits that might be derived from encouraging the visits and even the residence of the traders as this incident demonstrates.[50] On this occasion it was clear that the sandalwood traders were acting as agents on behalf of the Kanala chief. Discussions of incidents such as this have featured within the reclamation of indigenous agency within Pacific history. Nicholas Thomas argues that 'Insofar as any single story has provided a context for the various particular histories, it has been the refutation of the fatal impact of colonialism upon passive Pacific peoples.'[51]

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[47] William Gill, *Gems from the Coral Islands* (London: Ward & Co.,1855-1856).

[48] John MacGillivray, 'Reminiscences of New Caledonia-III', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 March 1860, 3.

[49] Referred to as 'Captain O' by MacGillivray.

In her analysis of early violent encounters between Pacific islanders and colonising powers with a focus on conflict in the early colonial period in New Caledonia, Bronwyn Douglas has argued that in order to provide a framework from which analysis of such incidents can occur it is necessary to take a multifaceted look at specific events within a broader colonial context.[52] Douglas argues that this approach 'enables customary warfare and expansion, intergroup conflict, anti-colonial resistance and deliberate or inadvertent co-operation and compromise with Europeans, at various stages during the colonial process, to be integrated within a common interpretive framework.'[53]

Sources such as MacGillivray's *Reminiscences of New Caledonia* provide key documentation of violent encounter, cooperation and conflict at a crucial period of contact in the south-west Pacific. His writings demonstrate the complexity of relationships and responses to numerous specific encounters. His status as a relative outsider makes him a particularly valuable source. His interest in ethnography also means that he is far more aware of regional differences, alliances and affiliations than many other observers of the period. An examination of sources such as this does more than assert the importance of indigenous agency – it demonstrates the complexity involved in each interaction.

MacGillivray ended his account of his adventures in New Caledonia with comments regarding the issue of trade. He took aim at the French administration noting that '…it is useless to speculate on the future of New Caledonia, while under the withering blight of French military despotism.'[54]

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[50] MacGillivray, 'Reminiscences of New Caledonia-III', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 March 1860, 3.

[51] Nicholas Thomas, *In Oceania: Visions, Artifacts, Histories* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 1997), 36.

[52] Bronwyn Douglas, 'Conflict and Alliance in a Colonial Context: Case Studies in New Caledonia 1853-1870', *The Journal of Pacific History*, 15, 1 (1980): 24.

[53] Douglas, 'Conflict and Alliance in a Colonial Context', 25.

[54] MacGillivray, 'Reminiscences of New Caledonia-VI', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 March 1860, 3.

MacGillivray's bitterness against the French had just received new impetus as at the time of writing the tension between Paddon and the French authorities had finally boiled over. The conflict has not received any significant analysis or attention and yet it offers a fascinating insight into the way in which New Caledonia was operating and the undercurrents and race relations that were at play. Paddon, MacGillivray wrote, had been 'hunted out of the country'[55] putting in jeopardy all of his holdings and operations. The conflict between Paddon and French authorities is documented more fully in MacGillivray's later writings for the *Empire* in the *Scraps* series of 1864. As well as highlighting the tensions of the period and the politics of French colonisation it was to have a direct bearing on the direction of MacGillivray's own career.

Although Paddon benefitted considerably from the presence of the French in terms of trade the relationship between Paddon and the French authorities was mixed. On 4 October 1859 the *Queensland Free Press* carried the sensational headline, 'EIGHT HUNDRED MILES IN A WHALEBOAT!' The story that followed detailed the flight of Paddon from New Caledonia in a five-oared whaleboat accompanied by two white men and three 'natives'. The party had landed on Morton Island after a journey of ten days. According to the paper Paddon had fled following threats on his life from the French authorities in Port de France.

The reason for his flight centred on the execution of three white men William Balley, Frederick Williams and Thomas Smith, in the district of Yengen.[56] The French authorities alleged that these men had joined forces with the 'natives' during hostilities against the French and had, in addition, supplied them with arms and ammunition. The key points of contention related to the justification for, and timing of, their execution. In Paddon's version of events given in 1859 a mere 15 minutes elapsed between their capture and brutal execution on the beach.[57] The *Sydney Morning Herald* published a version of events given by a 'French gentleman' in which the time between capture and execution was given as seven days during which time a fair and honest trial was given to the men concerned.[58]

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[55] MacGillivray, 'Reminiscences of New Caledonia-I', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 March 1860, 3.

[56] There is conflicting evidence regarding the names of the three executed. MacGillivray lists them as William Williams, Frederick Williams and Samuel Taylor. The *South Australian Advertiser* lists them as Williams, Bailey and Smith. In another report the *South Australian Advertiser* lists two men as British subjects and one as American, *South Australian Advertiser*, 6 October 1859, 2.

[57] *South Australian Advertiser*, 12 October 1859, 3.

[58] *Ibid*

Opinion in the press was divided between concern about French aggression towards those regarded as British subjects and a feeling that these 'British subjects' might indeed have sided with 'natives' against a civilized nation therefore forfeiting their rights to the protection and care of other civilized people. This is a further instance in which the writings of missionaries from the region can be seen to have influenced public opinion regarding the status of white settlers in the area. The *South Australian Advertiser* stated:

> With respect to the punishment inflicted upon these unfortunate wretches – assuming the facts to be as we have stated, there can be no doubt that it was just and politic. We need not be informed that in New Caledonia, as well as in other islands of the South Sea, a large number of persons are scattered, who use their power over the natives to induce them to all sorts of demoralisation and crime. The presence of any regular government is an eyesore to them, and it has only been the want of force which has prevented their disturbing every effort to establish civilisation. Missionaries of all denominations speak of them as the great pests they have to encounter, and as the chief source of their personal danger.[59]

The *Advertiser* re-published a letter from the Sydney *Empire,* which justified the actions of the French in a similar manner. The accused men, the letter stated, had been given a fair trial and could not, it stated, in truth be considered as British subjects. This class of men, the writer stated, 'don't belong to any nation, and when they can be punished it is truly a service done to the society who has expelled them already'.[60] The *Advertiser* felt that far from clarifying matters, recent accounts of the incident were further obscuring the affair. The *Empire* and *SMH*, were, the *Advertiser* argued far too willing to accept a French version of events. This particular letter was:

> ...a most exquisite specimen of Frenchified English, and we hope it will not turn out that M. De Saisset has been taking as much liberty with English subjects as his apologist has taken with the English language.[61]

MacGillivray's version of events only adds to the complexity of the affair. In MacGillivray's account the three men in question were engaged in the coconut oil trade and, he states, had sought refuge on board a French vessel when fighting had commenced.[62] Three days after they boarded the vessel they were taken on shore and executed:

> ...under circumstances of great atrocity; for no savages who took part in any of the French revolutions would have shown more fiendish malice than did the

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[59] *Ibid*

[60] *South Australian Advertiser*, 21 October 1859, 3.

[61] *Ibid*

[62] John MacGillivray, 'Scraps from journals in the S.W. Pacific. No.IX. An Episode in the History of New Caledonia', *Empire* (Sydney), 6 June 1864, 5.

> perpetrators of this butchery – desecration of the unburied dead, and wanton destruction of what had been their property.[63]

According to MacGillivray the French alleged that a confession from one of those executed implicated Paddon in the supply of prohibited articles to the New Caledonians, a claim MacGillivray states 'I *know* to be utterly false, and a foul stain attempted to be fixed on the memory of that thoroughly honest man'.[64] Word is said to have reached Paddon via a friend who travelled back to Port de France overland that the Governor was uttering threats concerning what he would do to Paddon on his return. When Paddon heard this he immediately took to the ocean on his dangerous journey leaving his family and all of his assets behind him.

By December the coverage of the incident had shifted gear. An article from 'a correspondent' in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 12 November 1859, labelled Paddon's flight as absurd. In an example of what would today perhaps be called a damage control exercise, the article stated that his many friends in New Caledonia were bemused by his flight as his life and property were as safe at Port de France as in Sydney. The author stated that a situation of perfect harmony and accord existed between the French and English populations.[65] Paddon's own stated intention upon his arrival at Morton Island to return to New Caledonia along with the whaleboat that saved his life and therefore had become precious to him, indicates that he felt that the situation was certainly manageable and that perhaps temper rather than fear lay at the bottom of his flight. MacGillivray states however that the threats were real having been told that one of the pilots stationed at the Straits of Wai had been given instructions to take Paddon dead or alive should he pass that way.[66] A letter written by MacGillivray to his old *Rattlesnake* shipmate James Fowler Wilcox indicates that in 1860 Paddon was considering removing his operations from New Caledonia and establishing himself somewhere in the Torres Strait,[67] a plan that never eventuated. The fact that he was considering such a significant move is however an indication that there were ongoing tensions with the French authorities in New Caledonia and in particular with the Governor, De Saisset.

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[63] *Ibid*

[64] *Ibid*

[65] *Sydney Morning Herald,* 11 December 1859, 4. Curiously the article goes on to detail the killing of a Frenchman, Caporn, and his crew by natives at Yengen. Caporn was a French settler who worked for a time for Captain Paddon. There is no record of his being killed and it would appear that he actually eventually settled in Sydney and opened a sweets shop in Kissing Point.

[66] John MacGillivray, 'Scraps from journals in the S.W. Pacific. No.IX. An Episode in the History of New Caledonia', *Empire* (Sydney), 6 June 1864, 5.

[67] MacGillivray to Wilcox, 16 January 1860, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, ML Doc169b.

The coverage of this incident highlights the ongoing tension in Australia regarding French colonisation in the Pacific. The belief that England had a stronger claim to the territory of New Caledonia was still widespread and there was some feeling that perhaps military force should be used in order to drive the French away. Paddon himself felt that the 'natives' would welcome the English over their French colonisers to the extent that some of his friends in New Caledonia felt that if he, Paddon, were shot or killed that perhaps it would encourage England to come to the defence of its citizens and rescue the nation.

Perhaps the most interesting of MacGillivray's observations on this particular episode in terms of the conflict at Yengen that resulted in the execution of the men, are his comments regarding the way in which the French authorities, and in particular the French Governor, implemented a policy of aggression towards the chiefs of New Caledonia. This policy, MacGillivray stated:

> ...affords another illustration of the so much lauded "civilisation" system. The chiefs of sufficient importance to be formidable are either killed by the French (directly as Jorde; indirectly, as Wendagu), put in the way of being killed (like the Precepo chief), or treacherously entrapped and sent to Tahiti (as Basset and others). Their places are supplied by creatures of the priests, or of the Governor, who are bound to do any dirty work required by their patrons.[68]

MacGillivray was firmly entrenched in the anti-French camp. He recognised that some people may have compared the French annexation of New Caledonia to the actions of the British in New Zealand. This, he argues, would be unjust; the French had not paid a single centime of compensation to the New Caledonian population.[69] In the first of his *Reminiscences of New Caledonia*, published in 1860, MacGillivray commented on a notice contained in the *SMH* on 15 June regarding land grants in New Caledonia stretching across the island from Port St Vincent to Kanala. MacGillivray stated:

> ... The rights of a large native population to the country which they had occupied from time immemorial are thus quietly dealt with. The grantees "are bound to pay an indemnity to the natives for their land *if required (!)*. They will have to protect and defend their settlements, and their immigrants themselves, *against the natives*."[70]

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[68] John MacGillivray, 'Scraps from journals in the S.W. Pacific. No.IX. An Episode in the History of New Caledonia', *Empire* (Sydney), 6 June 1864, 5.

[69] *Ibid*

[70] *Ibid*

MacGillivray makes no comment on the rights of the Australian native population and the actions of Britain in that country – further evidence, if any were needed, of the way in which the rights of the Australian 'natives' were viewed at this time.

MacGillivray's articles on New Caledonian natural and political history were published after his departure from the island. His eight-month residence had reinvigorated his spirit for adventure and furnished him with valuable material and connections, connections he would make the most of in the following years. As he carved out his independent career his ventures in the islands of the south-west pacific also provided him with opportunities to re-establish old ties and networks and the hope of re-entering the world of scientific discovery from which he had been so devastatingly dismissed.

It was only a month before Paddon's midnight flight from New Caledonia in his whaleboat that MacGillivray began the next stage of his Pacific journey. It is probable that he left New Caledonia on board one of Paddon's sandalwooding vessels. Although he would return to Port de France on a number of occasions he would never again reside there for any length of time.

MacGillivray's natural history notebook records that he travelled from Port de France, to the island of Eromanga. After a brief stay at Eromanga his next stop was the island of Aneityum. Today these islands form part of what is now known as the Tafea province of Vanuatu. The province is made up of Tana, Aniwa, Futuna, Eromango (the largest island in the group) and Aneityum. MacGillivray would make a number of return visits to Eromango in the following year. However it was Aneityum that was to be his main base of operations for the remainder of his south-west Pacific period.

MacGillivray was well acquainted with the island of Aneityum having made two previous visits to the island during the voyage of the *Herald.* His first visit was in November 1853 on the ship's first outward cruise after its arrival in Sydney. His second visit was almost exactly a year later in late November 1854 as the doomed search for Benjamin Boyd commenced. MacGillivray's *Herald* journal from both visits records his admiration for the island.

His descriptions of the island's flora and fauna reveal a fondness for Aneityum over many other islands he visited during the *Herald's* cruise. When he first saw the island he recorded that its diverse and well-wooded appearance augured well for zoology and botany.[71] He excitedly noted that the mountains were partially covered with misty cloud and presented promising valleys and ravines. After attending a church service in which the singing pleased him greatly he sat and quietly smoked a pipe under a fine tree. The ceaseless humming of cicadas stationed on the trunks of the bread-fruit trees, the singing of the birds and the graceful fronds of numerous ferns and palms all impressed themselves on his memory.[72]

For MacGillivray the island of Aneityum held another powerful attraction. Although Paddon found sharing the island with the missionary John Geddie impossible, MacGillivray was to find a new home with the Geddies – an association that would open up the islands to him and provide a stable base for his collecting on the island as well as precious friendships that would remain important to MacGillivray for the remainder of his life.

MacGillivray's journal and his later writings record his great admiration for the work of the missionaries Geddie and Inglis. MacGillivray had heard of the missionaries as rumours concerning the conflict between Paddon and Geddie in 1851 had filtered throughout the region. By the end of his first visit to the island MacGillivray wrote that he felt that these rumours 'greatly maligned two good men devoted to the service of their divine master'. He had ample opportunity to observe the work of the missionaries first hand. On his first visit to the island John Inglis invited him, along with the ship's assistant surgeon, J.D MacDonald, to travel to his home on the northern side of the island at Aname. Inglis had a particular interest in the Aneityese language, producing numerous religious texts in the language for use on the mission. Together the pair spent many hours discussing linguistic and ethnographic issues. Inglis impressed the naturalist with his knowledge and dedication. He assisted MacGillivray with vocabularies providing information on grammar and also provided a vocabulary for the island of Tana that had been compiled by one of his fellow missionaries, the Reverend Turner. After his stay with Inglis, MacGillivray made his way back to the *Herald*, 'most reluctantly'[73].

During the *Herald's* fist visit Captain Denham and the rest of the crew also made a favourable impression on the missionaries. Denham often went ashore to take tea with the Geddie family during the *Herald's* stay and Mr and Mrs Geddie both regretted the ships departure as their interactions with the Captain and all of the ships officers had been of such a pleasant nature.[74] MacGillivray, it transpired, was a distant relation of Mrs Geddie.[75]

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[71] John MacGillivray, *Voyage of H.M.S. Herald, Private Journal,* 7 November 1853.

[72] MacGillivray, *Voyage of H.M.S. Herald, Private Journal,* 20 November 1853.

[73] MacGillivray, *Voyage of H.M.S. Herald, Private Journal,* 21 November 1853.

The second visit in 1854 was of shorter duration but was no less congenial. As soon as the *Herald* anchored MacGillivray was thrilled to receive no fewer than six specimens of shells and animals preserved in a solution of chloride of zinc collected for him by Reverend Geddie. The assistance rendered indicates that the two had already found a certain friendship that would stand MacGillivray in good stead when he returned to the island to take up a more permanent residence there. On his second visit to the island in 1854 MacGillivray was impressed with the considerable progress made by the missionaries in the year between his visits. He noted the construction of a new church and many new and attractive residences of a far better quality than had been present on his previous visit. [76] The island was, he wrote later, 'one bright spot in the midst of so much moral darkness'.[77]

By the time that MacGillivray arrived back on the island in 1859 Geddie's mission had been established for over ten years and was certainly one of the most successful in the region. On this, his third visit to the island of Aneityum, his enjoyment of the place and its people would not have to be curtailed. Quite how MacGillivray explained his departure from the *Herald* to Inglis and the Geddies is not recorded. It is clear however that he established himself firmly into the life of the missionary station taking up residence in one of the mission buildings. In his letter to Wilcox of 1860 MacGillivray described his accommodation on the island.

> ...(altho' I have a detached house to myself & a summer house for the stinkables & do as I like) of course I am on very good behaviour so we all get on very well together.[78]

MacGillivray dedicates one of his *Scraps* to a description of the island and notes that his accommodation adjoined the mission's printing workshop.[79] MacGillivray clearly behaved sufficiently well to successfully ingratiate himself with the entire Geddie family. In a letter of October 1858 Charlotte Geddie, Reverend Geddie's seventeen year old daughter who had returned to the island after attending school in England mentions that MacGillivray had been staying at the mission for some time and had amassed a wonderful collection of shells, birds, ferns and other specimens.[80] The extent of MacGillivray's affection for the Geddies, and for their daughter in particular, only becomes clear in his later writings.

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[74] John Geddie, *Misi Gete,* 167-168.
[75] John Geddie, *Misi Gete,* 168.
[76] MacGillivray, *Voyage of H.M.S. Herald, Private Journal,* 29 November 1854.
[77] John MacGillivray, 'Scraps from Journals in the S.W. Pacific. About Nina and Futuna', *Sydney Morning Herald,* 4 April 1864, 5.
[78] MacGillivray to Wilcox, 16 January 1860, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, ML Doc169b.
[79] John MacGillivray, 'Scraps from journals in the S.W. Pacific. No.VI. Jottings about Aneiteum', *Empire* (Sydney), 28 April 1864, 5.

Aneityum was to provide MacGillivray with ample material for his collecting work and his growing occupation of trading in natural history specimens. In 1860 he submitted an article, 'Zoological Notes from Aneiteum, New Hebrides', to the *Zoologist.* Along with descriptions of the island's fish and the poisonous properties attributed to a shell-fish (*Conus textile*), the article contained descriptions for a new species of petrel (*Procellaria torquate*), bat (*Pteropus geddiei*), and leaf insect (*Prisopus carlottæ*).[81]

In his description of his *Pteropus geddiei* MacGillivray stated that he first met with this gregarious new bat on a visit to Aneityum around six years ago but was forced to discard his specimens for want of necessary preservatives and the intervention of two very hot days. He named the bat:

> In honour of the Reverend J. Geddie, who, in common with all the members of his amiable family, not only materially assisted me in forming my collection, while at the same time enjoying his hospitality, but has himself become a collector of zoological specimens for his friends in Nova Scotia and Canada.[82]

MacGillivray noted that with their formidable canine teeth the *Pteropus geddiei* were able to inflect severe bites and 'retain their hold of a mouthful with great tenacity'. Given the accounts of Geddie's work on the island the quality of tenaciousness may have struck MacGillivray as particularly apt.

The article goes on to furnish further evidence of the assistance rendered to MacGillivray by the Geddie family in his description of his new leaf insect, found on the trunks of trees and called by the Aneityum locals 'Naling'. MacGillivray named it for Charlotte Geddie an act which '...is intended to commemorate the occasional assistance rendered me by Miss Geddie while collecting here, more especially as this is one of her contributions.'[83]

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[80] Charlotte Geddie Harrington to Mary [?], October 26 1858, Charlotte Geddie Harrington Correspondence, Dalhousie University Library, Halifax, Nova Scotia, MS-2-281.

[81] John MacGillivray, 'Zoological notes from Aneiteum, New Hebrides'. *Zoologist,* Vol. xviii (1860): 7134.

[82] *Ibid*

[83] *Ibid*

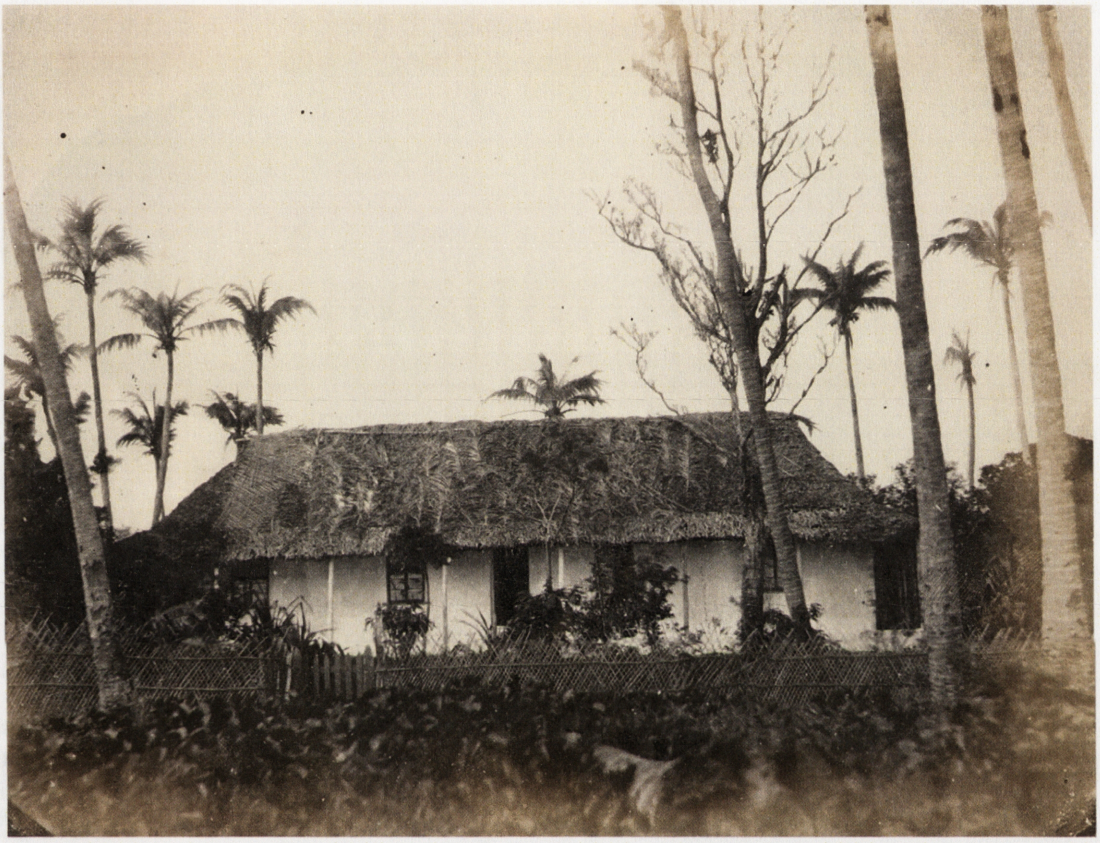

Plate: 23: Residence of Rev. John Geddie, Missionary at Aneityum, New Hebrides
Residence of Mr. Gedye [probably Rev John Geddie], Missionary at Aneiteum, New Hebrides in 'Photographs of H.M.S. *Pelorus* and crew members, including portraits and views taken in Fiji, New Hebrides, New Zealand and Norfolk Island, ca. 1860-1861'.
(Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales)

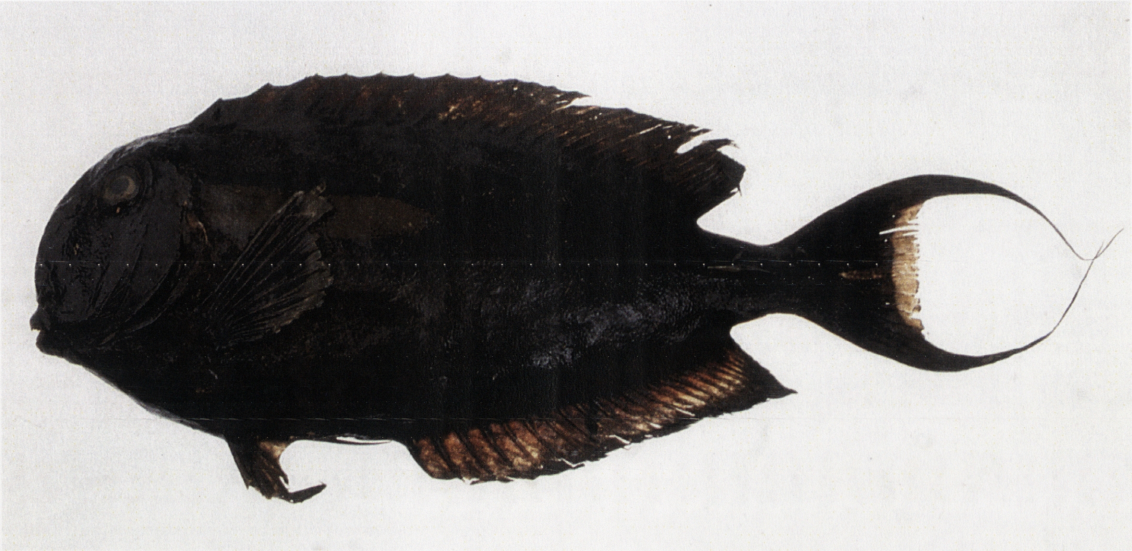

Plate: 24: Orangeband Surgeonfish (*Acanthurus olivaceus*)
The oldest fish in the Australian Museum collection: an orangeband surgeonfish *Acanthurus olivaceus*, collected in 1858 in the New Hebrides (Vanuatu) by John MacGillivray.
(© Australian Museum)

In a letter written to Geddie in July 1860 from Eromanga MacGillivray is clearly on affectionate terms with the family hoping that they have heard from Charlotte who had just returned to England escorting two of her younger siblings and noting with pleasure that they had heard from one of their daughters, Lucy. He writes that his letter is to both Mr and Mrs Geddie with 'grateful recollections of Mrs Geddie's kindness.[84]

Further evidence of the close relationship between MacGillivray and the Geddies is his use of the mission schooner during his time in Aneityum. It would appear that MacGillivray's 'island hopping', as recorded in his natural history notebook, was at times facilitated by the *John Knox*, a small schooner of between 11 and 12 tons. It was purchased by the New Hebrides Mission in 1857 and was in service until it was replaced by *The Dayspring*, a much larger brigantine of 115 tons in 1864. Although small the *John Knox* allowed the missionaries of the New Hebrides to travel between the islands on a far more regular basis than was previously possible. [85]

As well as the congenial atmosphere evident from such communications and concessions the island had much to offer MacGillivray as a naturalist. Given the size of the island of Aneityum the range of specimens MacGillivray gathered is remarkable. In his letter to Wilcox the pace of collecting and MacGillivray's continuing enthusiasm for all that the island has to offer is clear:

> Although I had collected so much here yet it is a fact that nearly every day novelties are brought me – Take fishes for instance – In the collection of stuffed ones (not counting those in spirits) sent to London were 103 species – yet when on my return here in Decr last I took to fishes again, I find that in 4 weeks, out of 80 fishes stuffed & now hanging on my wall today, not less than 37 of the species are additions making in all 140 kinds at the present date.[86]

Collections of the Natural History Museum in the United Kingdom provide further evidence of MacGillivray's success in trading. The Museum holds three large fish collections that would appear to date from MacGillivray's visits on the *Herald* and his later residence in Aneityum. Marine shells, MacGillivray complained to Wilcox, were worth little or nothing and so he would not collect them. He also noted that although insects were often brought to him that London was sufficiently stocked with insects from the region.[87] Admitting that he did not like to throw them away he wondered if he might sell them in France through the Sydney based merchant, Monsieur Noufflard, who had established a flourishing wool trade with vessels sailing direct from Sydney to France.

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[84] MacGillivray to Geddie, Fragment of letter, In Presbyterian Victoria Foreign Missions Committee Correspondence relating to the New Hebrides – typescript provided by G.S. Parsonson. Parsonson commented in his letter 'I must say I was interested to discover that McGillivray [sic] was sufficiently respectable to live on the mission premises on Aneityum and to be on very friendly terms with John Geddie, the resident missionary and founder of the New Hebrides Presbyterian Mission.' Letter from Parsonson to S. Jensen, 18 August 2008.

[85] Robert Steel, *The New Hebrides and Christian Missions. With a Sketch of the Labour Traffic, and Notes of a cruise through the Group in the mission vessel* (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1880), 61.

[86] MacGillivray to Wilcox, 16 January 1860, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, ML Doc169b.

The people of Aneityum assisted MacGillivray in his collecting activities with items being brought to him on a daily basis. The influence of the mission had an obvious effect as MacGillivray noted that although in other islands tobacco was the major item of trade on Aneityum it was seldom asked for. Instead he had to keep a stock of prints for the ladies, tomahawks for the men and jews harps for juveniles. The items delivered to him, together with his own collecting excursions meant that the pace of collecting was, in fact, so great that for days at a time, MacGillivray complained, he did not even have time to take a wash for the sake of his health.[88]

Health was an ongoing issue for MacGillivray and for many individuals working in or travelling through the region. Although Aneityum proved to have an agreeable climate continuing attacks of fever would lay him low for some days at a time.[89] This problem, he correctly assumed, would be one that would continue to plague him throughout the remainder of his life. In his letter to Geddie written in July 1860 from Eromanga the strain that was being placed on MacGillivray's health by life in the tropics is clear:

> ...I take up my pen although I am so weak as to feel it irksome – I have had another attack of ague & have just got up – The plates are rattling at dinner in the other room, but I have no appetite – it is raining heavily, but this fortunately keeps visitors away as I must either keep the door open or light a candle...[90]

He noted in this same letter that with Captain Edwards help he has sent Aneityum specimens by the *Woodlark*. All of this activity makes it clear that MacGillivray had, to some extent, managed by this stage to establish a viable business in private collecting. His natural history notebook records three shipments of material back to England for the natural history collector Hugh Cuming in the period 1860-1862. How contact between MacGillivray and Cuming had been re-established is unclear but the relationship had clearly recovered somewhat from its low point of 1855. MacGillivray was managing this side of his operations through the sandalwood trader Captain Edwards. Edwards was a partner of Paddon, managing his station on Eromanga and later in Port de France. MacGillivray noted in his letter to Wilcox that his arrangement with Edwards was far more satisfactory than a prior arrangement he had had with an individual called Turner who was taking a fifty percent agents' fee with freight paid for by MacGillivray. He grimly noted that:

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[87] *Ibid*

[88] *Ibid*

[89] *Ibid*

[90] MacGillivray to Geddie, Fragment of letter – typescript provided by G.S. Parsonson.

> I suppose if he got anything form me he w^{d} sell them in Sydney for what they w^{d} fetch & I might wait the day of judgement for a final settlement, as I shall have to do I suppose for the transactions already between us.[91]

MacGillivray's time on Aneityum provides ample evidence for his growing trade in natural history specimens. It provides a picture of how he conducted his affairs and the people with whom he shared his daily life. There was however another string to his bow, which he was busy cultivating and which ran parallel in many ways to his collecting activities. His friendship and admiration for the work of the missionaries of the New Hebrides had not prevented him from forming ties with the sandalwood traders. These ties provided new opportunities for employment and travel, opportunities that MacGillivray took, despite his feelings regarding the vast majority of those he would be brought into contact with once he 'turned sandalwooder'.

MacGillivray's notes and observations regarding the sandalwood industry in the South Pacific in the 1850s-60s are a valuable contribution to the literature surrounding this field of interest. His observations are based on some of the last years of the trade and in many ways he documents its downfall. By the time he wrote he noted that sandalwood was nearly exhausted as a trade. It was a period of desperation and a certain amount of despair. Profits were dwindling and many areas were bearing the scars of an often destructive and certainly violent trade. Letters from William Underwood, initially a manager for Paddon and later for Towns, on the state of the trade in 1860, reveal the feelings of desperation at the dwindling supply of the precious commodity. The only reason Underwood felt that he would break even on the trade in that year was through good luck and good management.[92] Sixty tons was considered at this stage to be a stroke of good fortune and the same amount of trade was required to obtain this amount as would previously have obtained 180 tons.[93] In another letter on the same subject he noted that:

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[91] MacGillivray to Wilcox, 16 January 1860, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, ML Doc169b.

[92] Underwood to Towns, 4 December 1860, Robert Towns & Co. Papers, 1856-1881, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, MS307, 187.

[93] *Ibid* In the same letter Underwood states that '...reverse the picture, say I had average success, or have lost one of the vessels (for they have not been Insured) and you would have seen your old friendly on your

> ...every year will be less, I have worked every Island this year, that we know sandalwood grows on, both with vessel and station, buying and cutting ourselves, the result will be about 120 tons, and there have been about 120 men engaged in processing it, so it must evidently be getting a scarce commodity, as well as an expensive one, and as Capt Towns told me once, "you can buy gold too dear".[94]

Not everyone felt that the decline in trade was necessarily a bad thing. MacGillivray commented that:

> It is, I think a fortunate event for the islanders of the South-West Pacific that sandalwooding is on its last legs. This once very lucrative business, which admitted of being conducted in a fair and reputable manner throughout, was not always managed as fair trading, and it never was conducive to morality, but generally was directly antagonistic.[95]

MacGillivray's observations regarding the industry and its effect on the islands and people of the region are invaluable. In his movements around the islands of New Caledonia and the New Hebrides he came into close contact with many individuals working in the industry. He commented in a letter to Geddie that he had met every sandalwood captain - once he had made the acquaintance of a Captain Anderson he was then able to say that his 'personal acquaintance with them is complete'.[96] He described himself as having turned 'sandalwooder' for a short period and stated that it was on the island of Eromanga that he had the most significant contact with the industry. Clearly writing to his audience MacGillivray also stated that:

> After some experience now – that (with some exception- very few indeed) a more depraved or licentious class of men who ought to know better does not exist upon the earth.[97]

As with Aneityum, Eromanga was a small island that played a significant role in both missionary and sandalwood history. By the late 1850s it was one of the most active sandalwood depots in the New Hebrides. In MacGillivray's *Scraps* series he related an incident that occurred on the island in 1859. It was on a voyage on the *John Knox* that MacGillivray returned to Eromanga in 1859 and participated in a significant confrontation between Eromangans and resident sandalwood traders. This particular event has been

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arrival, not in the Volunteer Brigade but in Kecks or whoever has charges of that establishment of Martyrs (or Rogues)...' Kecks refers to Darlinghurst Gaol – Kecks was the by now infamous Commandant of the prison.

[94] Underwood to Towns, 10 December 1860, Robert Towns & Co. Papers, 1856-1881, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, MS307, 187, 2.

[95] John MacGillivray, 'Scraps from journals in the S.W. Pacific. No.VIII, Eramanga and its Sandalwooders', *Empire* (Sydney), 20 May 1864, 5.

[96] MacGillivray to Geddie, Fragment of letter – typescript provided by G.S. Parsonson.

[97] *Ibid*

partially documented in a range of sources. The confrontation brings into focus the way in which the island sandalwood depots operated. An examination of the event also helps to document the significant impact that traders had on island populations as well as offering a glimpse into relations between trader and missionary systems. MacGillivray's version of events is significant as it links the partial accounts given by others and provides a background to the situation in a far greater detail than would otherwise have been available.

By 1859 there were two sandalwooding stations in operation on the island of Eromanga – one operated by Captain Edwards, by this stage a partner of Captain Paddon (who had entered into a financing arrangement with his old rival Robert Towns)[98] and the other run by Captains Henry, Mair and Fletcher (confusingly also financed by Towns and at different stages of their careers employed directly by Paddon).[99] The missionary stationed on the island was Reverend George Gordon who had taken up residence along with his wife, Ellen in June 1857and had met with mixed success in his labours to convert the Eromangan population.[100] Known for many years by the New Hebrides missionaries as the Martyrs Island, it was an island with a violent contact history. The murder (and consumption) of the London Missionary Society's John Williams and James Harris in 1839 still loomed large in the memories of the missionaries stationed throughout the region. Two further missionary martyrdoms were to take place on the island - one not long after the events of April/May 1859 related by MacGillivray.

Captain Edwards was resident on the island along with his wife. If not always an easy relationship between the traders and the missionaries, the two certainly had significant contact with each other. In one of the only references to their dealings it is recorded that Mrs Edwards raised the sum of £20 for the British and Foreign Bible society 'from sandalwooding and other vessels visiting Eromanga'.[101] As a general rule, however, the missionaries felt that the sandalwooders had brought little except trouble to the island and were a significant force for evil within the region. Gordon wrote:

> Every beach on this ill-fated island has been stained with the blood of foreigners, and the sandal wood itself has been taken away besmeared with native blood.[102]

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[98] Shineberg, *They Came for Sandalwood*, 114.

[99] *Ibid*

[100] J.D.G, *The last martyrs of Eromanga : being a memoir of the Rev. George N. Gordon and Ellen Catherine Powell, his wife* (Halifax, N.S.: Macnab & Shaffer, 1863), 132.

[101] Rev. George Turner, *Nineteen years in Polynesia missionary life, travels and researches in the islands of the pacific*, (Papakura, N.Z. : R. McMillan, 1984. Facsim. of: London : J. Snow, 1861), 477.

[102] J.D.G, *The last martyrs of Eromanga*, 96.

The particular incident related by MacGillivray had its origin in a confrontation which took place in March 1859. All parties agree that Eromangans killed three white men and between two and four 'native' labourers all in the employ of Captain Edwards.[103] The cause of this dispute was the 'stealing' of an Eromangan woman, who had been living at the sandalwooding station, by an Eromangan man.

The Reverend George Turner in his work, *Nineteen years in Polynesia* says of the incident:

> So far as we could learn, the affair originated in a dispute about a native woman. The white men were mainly to blame. "They brought it upon themselves," was the remark of Captain Edwards, in whose employ the unhappy men were, and he, very properly, did not allow any attempt at retaliation.[104]

The missionary, Gordon, stated that he had been told:

> A man of Eromanga stole away a native woman from the premises of the foreigners, on account of which they became enraged, and having gathered together all their party, for revenge, spoiled the plantations of the natives, and killed their pigs. The Eromangans thus injured sent for their allies of the southern settlements and resolved to take vengeance on the foreigners. ... on the following morning while some were carrying water and others preparing for breakfast a host of enraged cannibals rushed upon them killing all but one or two who escaped badly wounded.[105]

MacGillivray's account of the origins of the dispute throw a much clearer light on the incident and the underlying tensions present on the island. The central issue was one of stolen property – the 'native woman' at the heart of this dispute being 'owned' by the sandalwood traders. 'Like the Trojan war there was a woman at the bottom of the whole affair.' he wrote:

> She was the wife of an Eramangan who, on one occasion, struck her with a tomahawk, and endeavoured to kill her, but she escaped. After this, Naiawan, the chief, sold her to a white man called B., the C., who, when about to leave the island, transferred her to his friend C. for a consideration. When C. left Narass, the lady became the property of N. by purchase, and he, when done with her, handed over the chattel to his chum J.C., who was then living in the bush with a party cutting sandalwood for Captain E.[106]

MacGillivray also details the 'retaliation' and subsequent attack. Despite Captain Edwards' feelings regarding retaliation, the actions of his employees, being based in the interior, placed them effectively out of the range of his authority. The injured parties made for

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[103] Turner states two (*Nineteen years in Polynesia,* 492), Gordon states four (*The last martyrs of Eromanga,* 148) and MacGillivray states four (Scraps-VIII).

[104] Turner, *Nineteen years in Polynesia,* 492.

[105] J.D.G, *The last martyrs of Eromanga,* 149.

[106] MacGillivray, 'Scraps from Journals in the South West Pacific. No. VIII', *Empire* (Sydney), 20 July 1864, 8.

Narass in Cook's Bay in order to regain the woman concerned. When they found that the woman was not present at the village they seized one of her relations, put him in irons and proceeded to burn buildings and crops and kill livestock. Their activities left them with only four bullets between them, a fact MacGillivray felt, would have been conveyed to their eventual attackers by their prisoner when he escaped the next morning. The party was attacked while preparing breakfast in Cook's Bay. Several men were killed on the spot while others were pursued and killed the following day – all of the victims were quickly eaten. MacGillivray reported that one of the white men was seen to be suffering with syphilis and that a number of chiefs who had partaken of his flesh subsequently died.[107]

The result of this violent confrontation was far-reaching. Gordon reported that on hearing reports of the incident he and Edwards received notes telling them that they were to be killed along with their wives and that their houses were to be burnt. Captain Edwards fled to New Caledonia taking his wife to safety. The island prepared for fresh conflict. The Gordons lived further inland than the sandalwooder's permanent stations (see sketch) and were considered in great danger. Gordon stated:

> A dark cloud seems now to be passing over this island. Satan's reign seems almost triumphant. Even now while writing the chiefs all around me are consulting about war. I fear they will be emboldened to do much more wickedly since their late success; and if they should rise against us to-morrow, I do not know six natives who would cleave to us.[108]

It was shortly after this that MacGillivray arrived on the island and was a direct participant in the events of the following weeks. The *John Knox* arrived in Dillon's Bay to be greeted by Captain Edwards who had just returned to the island from New Caledonia. He informed MacGillivray that an attack on the station was imminent and that preparations were underway to fortify the station. All sandalwooding in the interior had come to a standstill and the workers had retreated to the stations in order to prepare to defend themselves. The pair met Gordon at the entrance of the river in the bay. Gordon warned them that although he felt an outright attack was unlikely, stragglers would need to be wary. Disturbingly he also told them he could not rely on any of the 'natives' of the island and any of them would take a life if they felt that they could do so with impunity. For three days they worked on fortifying the station – reducing the size of the yard, storing drinking water in a cask, detaching the buildings for fear of attack by fire, taking up quarters in the store, boarding up verandahs and walls and mounting a ship's cannonade on a cart to be used as a field weapon. All was prepared for either a fight or siege.

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[107] *Ibid*

[108] J.D.G, *The last martyrs of Eromanga,* 149.

The cannonade was fired at regular intervals and the sound of it boomed and echoed across the bay. Gordon and his wife heard it up in their house and wondered what was to happen next. They remained fixed in their determination to stay in their house despite urgings from the sandalwooders to come and join them in the safety of their fortress. Gordon was sent messages but reported that it was their 'duty to remain at our post till compelled to flee'.[109]

The tension continued to rise for a number of weeks until the timely arrival of the sandalwooding vessel, the *Bluebell*. The arrival of these reinforcements coupled with the warlike preparations of the sandalwooding settlement was enough, MacGillivray stated, to make the Eromangans nervous and wish for parley. They brought gifts to Edwards of sugar cane, clubs, bows, arrows and red paint. A party was then sent forth from the fortification to check on the situation in the interior. The crisis slowly quietened and trading resumed.

The episode is revealing on a number of fronts. The confrontation highlights the precarious nature of race relations on these relatively small islands. The pressure of maintaining foreign workforces on a number of sandalwood stations threw populations and entire cultures into disarray. The scale of this invasive force is evident when during the conflict on Eromanga it was stated that Edwards was able to arm over 200 men should hostilities have broken out. The sandalwood stations were populated with workers from many different islands. In some cases this mix was a deliberate policy in order to ensure that the workers would find it more difficult to unite against their employers. This was a similar tactic to that practiced more forcefully by later blackbirding operations. Many of those working on sandalwooding crews had been taken against their will and an even greater number appear to have had little say in the length of their term of contract. MacGillivray wrote to Geddie that he had encountered a sandalwood Captain, a 'thorough ruffian' by the name of Anderson, who had forty men from Tana he was going to put to work on Espírito Santo, one of the most productive sandalwood islands, which 'he openly avowed having kidnapped most of them'. For his Sydney readers he commented that:

> I can now very well understand, …, how everything connected with even modified slavery (for such it certainly was in Eramanga) tends to harden the heart, and eventually to brutalise those engaged in it.[110]

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[109] *Ibid,* 157.

[110] MacGillivray, 'Scraps from Journals in the South West Pacific. No. VIII', *Empire* (Sydney), 20 July 1864, 8.

MacGillivray detailed many other instances of brutality, violence and cruelty committed by those involved in the trade.[111] He noted sadly that hardness eventually contaminates all who are exposed to it – 'natives' as well as whites. As an example of this MacGillivray detailed the plight of those workers who became ill whilst working on the sandalwood stations. Without the support of people from their own tribes or cultural groups those that were unable to look after themselves were, he stated, viewed as a nuisance and were often left to die unattended. One man MacGillivray found wrapped ready for burial was in fact still breathing and appeared to be suffering from an epileptic fit. MacGillivray unwrapped him and, with the help of ammonia, revived him. When he started to decline again MacGillivray went to retrieve more ammonia but was delayed for a matter of ten minutes. Upon his return he found that the man had already been taken away for burial.[112]

> Human nature seems to require that every man should have some inferior to lord it over. On Eramanga the whites, with very few exceptions, and these perhaps more apparent than real, looked upon any one with a skin darker than their own as an inferior, and treated him accordingly. The brutality with which the blacks in servitude on that island were frequently treated by their white masters, especially when in the bush and beyond supervision, has occasionally been almost incredible. ...[113]

MacGillivray left Eromanga following this incident and sailed back to continue his somewhat quieter life of collecting in Aneityum arriving back there in July. In September 1859 he returned to Eromanga, this time intending to take up a longer residence on the island as he had arranged with Captain Edwards to take over the running of the station. Edwards departed with his family for New Caledonia to take up work with Paddon. The timing of this venture was unfortunate. Edwards arrived in New Caledonia only to find that Paddon had fled to Sydney in his whaleboat leaving his enterprises in New Caledonia in a state of chaos. On finding Paddon gone Edwards decided to return to Eromanga to see what the state of affairs was.

Shortly after Edwards arrived back at Eromanga MacGillivray recorded that ships and supplies began arriving at the island from Sydney. Soon afterwards Paddon himself arrived at the island and, after consulting with Edwards, departed to take up residence back in New Caledonia. All prior arrangements now having 'capsized' MacGillivray decided to depart, leaving for Aneityum in December 1859. However at some point, perhaps while

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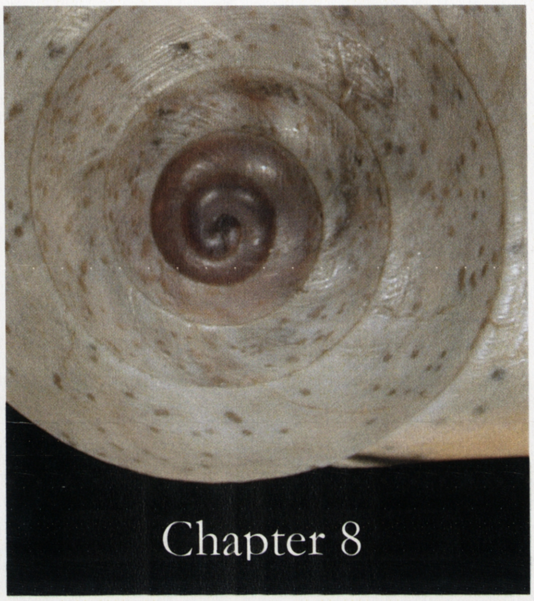
[111] Including in this same article one man being roasted alive.
[112] MacGillivray, 'Scraps from Journals in the South West Pacific. No. VIII', *Empire* (Sydney), 20 July 1864, 8.
[113] *Ibid*

Edwards, Paddon and MacGillivray conferred during this visit, a new plan was hatched - a cruise of the Torres Strait, a hunt for beche-de-mer, new sources of sandalwood and tortoise shell and a scouting trip looking for a new base of operations for Paddon. The expedition seemed too tempting for MacGillivray to refuse. He returned to Aneityum to wait out the hurricane season and to plan for this new venture.



Chapter 8

The Torres Strait Expedition
1860

There could be no greater contrast than the departures of the *Rattlesnake* from Plymouth in 1846 and the departure of the *Julia Percy* from Eromanga in 1860. In 1846 the Bishop of Norwich, Edward Stanley, had blessed the *Rattlesnake* and delivered his sermon on board on the Sunday before the ship's departure. The sermon focused on the importance of discipline. Discipline, the Bishop stressed, formed the cornerstone of the British Navy. Courage and bravery were nothing, he argued, without discipline to direct that courage. Discipline was also an essential weapon in the battle with earthly sins and temptation. Without godly discipline they would be 'drawn from the right course, and be tossed to and fro like a vessel without a helm.'[1]

The Bishop quoted Psalm 139 verses 6-9.

> Wither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I go down to hell, thou art there also. If I take the wings of the morning, and make my dwelling in the remotest parts of the sea; even there also shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall protect me.[2]

Perhaps the stark difference occurred to MacGillivray fourteen years later as he stood and observed the chaos that surrounded him on the morning of 16 July 1860, in Dillon's Bay, Eromanga. Perhaps he mused on the strange path that his life had taken and the change in circumstance that had led him to this outpost. He may even have wondered if he had found a remote enough part of the ocean that hopes for God's protection and guidance were best forgotten.

MacGillivray had been employed by Captain James Paddon to participate in a cruise of the Torres Strait. This new venture had been planned the previous year while Captain Paddon, Captain Charles Edwards and MacGillivray were together on the island of Eromanga. The cruise was of an entrepreneurial, opportunistic nature and was to search the area for resources - sandalwood, beche-de-mer and tortoise shell. Captain Paddon was also interested in scouting out possible sites to relocate his New Caledonian and Eromangan enterprises due to his continuing worries about his relationship with the French authorities in New Caledonia.[3] Concerns regarding the ability of the known sources of sandalwood to sustain the industry were already apparent. New sources needed to be identified, new industries fostered. The trip of the *Julia Percy* was to supply new hope to Paddon and Edwards – new locations, new sources and new produce. For MacGillivray's part the voyage offered a way of returning to locations he had visited during the voyage of the *Rattlesnake*. The voyage meant returning to rich collecting grounds and the opportunity to exploit new networks for private trading. He set out full of hope for the 'Torres Strait Expedition' and for the collections he hoped to amass. By the end of the voyage he would be full of disgust and despair, appalled at the company he was keeping and, for some time at least, living in fear for his life.

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[1] Bishop of Norwich Edward Stanley, *Address Delivered on Board H.M.S. "Rattlesnake", by Edward Stanley, D.D. Late Bishop of Norwich on November 29, 1846, Being the Sunday before the Departure of H.M.S. "Rattlesnake" For Australia and New Guinea, under the Command of The Late Captain Owen Stanley,* R.N. (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1850).

[2] *Ibid*

The story of the Torres Strait Expedition was related in a series of twelve articles written for the *Sydney Morning Herald* by MacGillivray and published two years after the expedition as '*Wanderings in Tropical Australia*'. These articles, MacGillivray stated, were written in order to induce those who might have the means or the inclination to explore and exploit the 'undeveloped resources of Torres Strait and the north-east coast of Australia.'[4] MacGillivray's account of the Torres Strait Expedition make an important contribution to the history of Pacific trading voyages so meticulously documented within Dorothy Shineberg's *They Came For Sandalwood.* In her work Shineberg makes only limited use of MacGillivray's *Wanderings* series.[5] Steve Mullins has made more significant use of the series in his work on the history of the Torres Straits along with episodes from MacGillivray's *Scraps* series.[6] However, I believe the significance of the voyage and MacGillivray's particular style of documentation warrants a more thorough investigation. The series is perhaps best compared with the writings of the trader Andrew Cheyne. Cheyne was a trader who worked in the south-west Pacific between 1841 and 1866. Cheyne recorded his voyages in a number of forms, some of which were published during his lifetime. His most significant writing was edited by Shineberg and published as *The Trading Voyages of Andrew Cheyne 1841-1844.*[7] There are interesting parallels between Cheyne and MacGillivray. Both men were good observers and relatively sympathetic to the people they encountered during their voyages. Both were able and engaging writers with an eye to popular distribution of their work. MacGillivray's and Cheyne's shared Scottish Presbyterian background is reflected in many of their attitudes and behaviours throughout their travels – such as their seemingly perverse insistence on observance of the Sabbath even amongst the roughest of companies.[8] It is important that the richness and significance of MacGillivray's *Wanderings* and *Scraps* series' as a source for this period is appreciated and further documented.

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[3] MacGillivray to Wilcox, 16 January 1860, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, ML Doc169b.

[4] John MacGillivray, 'Wanderings in tropical Australia No.I. Preliminary', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 January 1862, 5.

[5] Dorothy Shineberg, *They Came for Sandalwood: a study of the sandalwood trade in the south-west Pacific*, 1830-1865 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press; London, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 196-198.

[6] Steve Mullins, *Torres Strait, A History of Colonial Occupation and Culture Contact 1864-1897*, (Rockhampton: Central Queensland University Press, 1995), 56-58.

[7] Dorothy Shineberg (ed), *The Trading Voyages of Andrew Cheyne 1841-1844* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1971), 1.

The *Wanderings* series secures MacGillivray's place in Torres Strait contact history. Already regarded as an authority on the region thanks to his position on board the *Fly* and his, by now, well regarded, *Narrative of the Voyage of HMS Rattlesnake*, the accounts of his travels on board the *Julia Percy* add a fascinating chapter to his Torres Strait Islands experiences. Taken together these three voyages place MacGillivray in the Strait periodically, and often for extended periods, between 1842 and 1860 – crucial years in the period termed by Islanders in Creole as '*bipotaim*' the era beyond living memory but before the 1871 arrival of the missionaries and the 'Coming of the Light'.[9] The years in which MacGillivray was cruising through the Islands, meeting the people, documenting their languages, their cultures and artefacts was one of immense change. The voyage of the *Julia Percy* was in fact symptomatic of the most significant of these changes. A dramatic increase in trading contacts and the influx of Pacific Islanders brought as crews on trading vessels such as the *Julia Percy* was to alter the course of Torres Strait Islands history forever.

As well as the published account of the expedition MacGillivray's five journals from this period have survived.[10] These journals, never before studied, are remarkable in their candour and for what they reveal about the way in which the crews of brigs such as the *Julia Percy* conducted their operations in the Torres Strait. Examined in conjunction with the *Wanderings* series they are also enlightening in terms of the incidents and adventures that MacGillivray did not include in his published account. The chief difference between the two accounts of the voyage relates to the collecting activities of MacGillivray. The voyage was, for MacGillivray, a chance to return to some of the most profitable collecting locations with which he was familiar from his voyages on the *Fly* and *Rattlesnake*, locations, which on this occasion, he would be able to visit unfettered by official duties and naval routine. Now he was free to direct his own movements and activities. His duties on board the *Julia Percy* were never clearly defined, however he is best regarded as a professional guide. This role left him able to pursue his own goals throughout the cruise. The owners and Captain of the vessel (if not the crew) valued his knowledge of the area and its inhabitants. His botanical knowledge would also have been a useful addition to the ship's company as the hunt for sandalwood required correct identification of the wood. His official duties on board as recorded in his journal appear few. He undertook occasional writing tasks for the Captain, who he commented at one point was 'no scholar',[11] and would, later in the voyage, reluctantly, take on responsibility for navigation. However, primarily he was working as a naturalist and collector, albeit in unusual company.

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[8] Shineberg, *The Trading Voyages of Andrew Cheyne 1841-1844*, 24.
[9] Mullins, *Torres Strait*, 9.
[10] These journals are now held in the collection of the National Maritime Museum of Australia, Sydney. They were purchased by the Museum in 1991.

The Captain of the *Julia Percy* was William Banner – a big, burly, bearded and experienced sea trader.[12] The *Julia Percy* was a 100 ton vessel which MacGillivray scornfully reported 'had long borne away the palm as the dullest sailer in these seas'.[13] In what was a familiar pattern in MacGillivray's life, at the outset of the voyage his relationship with Banner was friendly; by the end of the expedition it would be strained almost to breaking point.

MacGillivray travelled from the Geddie's mission at Aneityum to Paddon's base in Port de France so as to be present when the expedition set out in June. Their first task was to obtain crew and supplies from the various islands of the Loyalty and New Hebrides groups. 'Pigs, yams and natives' were the essential requirements and all were successfully obtained.[14] In 1853 the French captain of a man-of-war described the white crews on trading vessels as comprising 'whatever was most foul and abandoned of the outcasts of Sydney'.[15] MacGillivray's observations of his shipmates would appear to confirm the suspicions of the French captain. The crew on board the *Julia Percy* was an interesting mix, comprising seventy-six individuals – described as seventeen white, seven Chinese, two half-caste children with the remainder coming from the Solomon Islands, New Caledonia, Mare, Lifu, Tana, Aneityum and Eromanga. Also on board were ten women who "belonged" to seven of the white, two of the Chinese and one of the New Caledonian, men. MacGillivray recorded that these women were:

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[11] John MacGillivray, *Journal II - September 18 1860 to December 4 1860. "Torres Strait Expedition"*, Australian National Maritime Museum, Sydney.

[12] Hector Holthouse, *Ships in the Coral: Explorers, Wrecks and Traders of the Northern Australian Coast* (North Ryde: Angus & Robertson, 1986), 203.

[13] MacGillivray, 'Wanderings in Tropical Australia No.I', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 January 1862, 5.

[14] *Ibid*

[15] Tardy de Montraver, 'New Caledonia – Translated from the Annales Maritimes et Coloniales', Nautical Magazine and Naval Chronicle, January 1856, pp. 76-77. Quoted in Mullins, *Torres Strait*, 62.

> ...mere slaves and about half of them were periodically reminded of their helpless state of bondage by an application of the fist or a rope's end, according to the humour of their lords. But I am not now desirous of treating of the domestic relations of the sandal-wood and beche-de-mer men; it would take a bolder writer than myself to grapple with the subject...[16]

When the *Julia Percy* was finally ready for departure along with its motley crew its decks were crammed with coops of turkeys, peafowl and other poultry, numerous chests of various dimensions, around sixty pigs and a number of dogs. There was barely enough space to move around the deck. MacGillivray was fortunate in his accommodation. A partial deck was laid on which the majority of the crew had to sleep. MacGillivray had a good bunk in a cabin and plenty of space, he thought, for all that he hoped to collect during the trip.[17] On 16 July they were farewelled from Dillon's Bay with three cheers from the captains of the four other boats in harbour. The cheers were returned by all those on board and the expedition set sail in high spirits for Lizard Island, which was to be the base for their operations.[18]

Lizard Island lies around 27km off mainland Australia in the Great Barrier Reef around 240km north of Cairns. It is a small granite island of around 7 square kilometres. The most famous visit to the Island took place in August 1770 when Captain James Cook, who named the island, climbed to the highest point, now known as Cook's Look, in an attempt to see a way through the surrounding treacherous reefs. HMS *Beagle* in 1839, HMS *Fly* in 1843 and HMS *Rattlesnake* in 1848 had also visited the island.

After an uneventful voyage of twelve days the *Julia Percy* arrived at the island and commenced the establishment of a depot at the south end of a sandy beach on the western side, now known as Watson's Bay. MacGillivray felt deep thanks that such a poor sailing, leaking and heavily laden vessel had made the crossing without incident.[19] The site chosen for the depot was close to the observation points used by Captains Blackwood and Stanley during the surveys of the area in the *Fly* and the *Rattlesnake* and would have stirred memories of these voyages for their former naturalist. Numerous grass houses were erected and a larger building intended as a storehouse and a residence for the chief of operations was begun.

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[16] John MacGillivray, 'Wanderings in Tropical Australia No.I', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 January 1862, 5.
[17] John MacGillivray, *Journal I. July 16 1860 to September 17 1860 "Torres Strait Expedition"*, National Maritime Museum of Australia, 16 July 1860.
[18] *Ibid*
[19] MacGillivray, *Journal I*, 28 July 1860.

This was MacGillivray's first trip back to Lizard Island since August 1848 when he spent a productive fortnight based there during the voyage of the *Rattlesnake.*[20] Immediately on arrival he set about visiting some of the locations he had frequented during his previous visit in the hope of obtaining specimens for his collection. He quickly cut a staff for his butterfly net and set about raking dead leaves searching for snails.[21] Later he went hunting for birds, eggs, shells and bats and feasted on a meal of fresh oysters.[22] The following day he staked out an area at the back of the swamp near the settlement began constructing a small garden for himself in which he hoped to sow vegetable seeds.[23]

In between collecting and setting up his garden MacGillivray sat on the beach and watched the unloading of some of the numerous chests and supplies from the vessel. He wondered at the reasoning for including articles such as 'an old jew's harpe, damaged cigars, thirty two dozen back cobs and nine bone side combes' and mused that perhaps all the rubbish at Porte de France had been put on board as dunnage.[24]

Thirteen days after landing, the Lizard Island base had taken on the appearance of a small village and was considered fit to operate.[25] MacGillivray had spent his time collecting and preparing specimens of all descriptions and carrying out writing tasks for Banner. He was also busily engaged in writing out an invoice of natural history specimens he had shipped at Port de France.[26] Domestic tasks also occupied his time as he cultivated his little garden and made sure that his clothes were fully washed so that he could put to sea with clean kit.

The *Julia Percy* set sail on 10 August to carry out the next phase in the venture – the search for new sources of sandalwood.[27] A party of thirty-two people were left on Lizard Island with instructions to establish a beche-de-mer operation utilising the neighbouring reefs. The first stop took place at the Howick Isles. Banner and MacGillivray made a search for sandalwood and beche-de-mer. They found none of the first and insufficient of the second to justify a longer stop. The *Julia Percy* then ventured around 170 miles up the coast and after four days landed on Night Island.

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[20] John MacGillivray, *Narrative of the Voyage of H.M.S. Rattlesnake, Commanded by the late Captain Owen Stanley, R.N., F.R.S. During the years 1846-1850. Including Discoveries and Surveys in New Guinea, The Louisiade Archipelago.* (London: T&W Boone, 1852), Vol.1, 108.
[21] MacGillivray, *Journal I,* 30 July and 1 August 1860.
[22] *Ibid,* 1 August 1860.
[23] Ibid, 2 August 1860.
[24] MacGillivray, 'Wanderings in tropical Australia No.I', *Sydney Morning Herald,* 4 January 1862, 5.
[25] MacGillivray, *Journal I,* 2 August 1860.
[26] *Ibid,* no date.
[27] John MacGillivray, 'Wanderings in tropical Australia No.II. First northern cruise', *Sydney Morning Herald,* 10 January 1862, 4.

Night Island was chosen as a site to search by Banner as he and Paddon had, 'by dint of much ingenuity', according to MacGillivray, ascertained that Captain McKellar, of the *Prince of Denmark*, had found sandalwood on the island some years ago.[28] In the sandalwood trade, secrecy was crucial. Competition for the resource was fierce and locations were jealously guarded. Vessels engaged in the trade would often disguise their true destinations for fear that others would follow.[29]

Banner and Paddon had obtained a clue regarding McKeller's source through one of the crew of the *Prince of Denmark*. The crew of the *Julia Percy* were sceptical. MacGillivray recorded in his journal that:

> Many have been the sneers and disparaging remarks about our finding sandal wood here, not only among the "beche de mer mob" but even with those on board the brig, and not further back either than this forenoon. So one can easily imagine our hopes and expectations when we stepped on shore, and all running up to a small tree, unanimously agreed it was sandal wood.[30]

The excitement was short-lived. It was quickly discovered that the trees were too small to be of commercial value and that there was no hope of obtaining a cargo from the island. The following day, leaving some of the crew to undertake some beche-de-mer collecting, the main party crossed to the mainland to continue their search. Again they met with disappointment. Despite two further days of searching, the only sandalwood that could be found was stunted and small and of no value to the traders. MacGillivray's frustration with his companions was again evident as on the second day of searching he once more mused on the direction that his life had taken:

> Here, as previously and subsequently, I could not help contrasting the beautifully simple and efficient regularity of the surveying boats to which I had been accustomed in former days with the total want of organisation displayed on the present occasion.[31]

He watched in horror as a white man and three 'natives' were left attending to the boats. During their operations the whaleboat broke adrift and chaos ensued. The white man attempted to 'save' the boat by jumping into the water only to find that he was out of his depth and was unable to swim. He was rescued by helpers, which left them unable to save the boat. Meanwhile the shore party had discovered that although they had been supplied with ammunition and muskets, they found that one member of the party had left his powder on board, another his bullets and that the muskets were so dirty as to be unworkable.[32] MacGillivray observed all of these proceedings with feelings of disdain and despair.

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[28] *Ibid*

[29] Dorothy Shineberg, *They Came for Sandalwood*, 30.

[30] MacGillivray, *Journal I*, 14 August 1860.

[31] MacGillivray, 'Wanderings in tropical Australia No.II', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 January 1862, 4.

Despite his horror at the company he was keeping, MacGillivray must have been pleased with the way in which his collections were steadily growing. Each day his journal filled with the notes of an active collector. Birds, bats, fish, snails, and shells - all fall victim to his gun, hook and rake. Night Island, while failing to produce sandalwood had surrendered a white fronted falcon (*Falco frontatus*), a beach thick-knee (*Esacus magnirostris*) and, to MacGillivray's delight, a *Helix gærtneriana* a specimen of which he had found at the same location on the voyage of the *Rattlesnake*.[33] Island number III in the Horwick group had provided a kingfisher (*Halcyon sordida)*, an oystercatcher and a fledgling osprey taken from its nest.[34] The excursions to the mainland had provided a wealth of shells – *Helix bipartita*, *Helix franklandensis* and what MacGillivray hoped was a new *Helix*. Captain Banner, by now a keen shell collector, found this new helix and kindly gave it to MacGillivray. MacGillivray repaid the debt by suggesting the name for the *Helix* in Banner's honour. In the *Proceedings of the Zoological Society* for 1862 MacGillivray's name appears once more. He wrote to describe the new shell:

> Helix, n.sp., may be called H.*banneri*, after Capt. Banner of the brig 'Julia Percy', who picked up the only specimen met with during an inland expedition a few miles to the Southward of Cape Direction. I was with him at the time, but we could find no more specimens.[35]

On 18 August the search for sandalwood took the party further inland. They travelled around five miles inland and attempted to reach the summit of a range of hills to obtain a better picture of the surrounding country. When the view revealed nothing promising they began to retrace their steps. The party found that the line of their route had been set on fire 'a sure indication of the presence of natives inclined to be hostile' noted MacGillivray.[36] MacGillivray went ahead and was about to take a shot at some Blue Mountain parrots[37] when Banner called out to him warning him not to shoot. The traders had suddenly found themselves surrounded by around 150 Aboriginal men.[38] The men were daubed and streaked with white paint and each held a throwing stick and spears. According to MacGillivray, he quickly took charge of the situation:

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[32] *Ibid*

[33] MacGillivray, *Journal I*, 13 August, 1860. See MacGillivray, *Narrative of HMS Rattlesnake*, Vol. 2, Appendix V, 372.

[34] MacGillivray, *Journal I*, 11 August 1860.

[35] Dr L. Pfeiffer , 'Descriptions of Thirty six new land shells, from the collection of H. Cuming, Esq'. *The proceedings of the scientific meetings of the Zoological Society of London* (London: Longman, Green, Longmans and Roberts, 1861-1891): 270.

> Being the only one of our party who knew how to deal with wild Australian natives otherwise than by shooting them, I was allowed to manage the business as I thought proper.[39]

Leaving his gun with his companions along with instructions about when to fire if necessary, MacGillivray approached with a leafy bough in one hand to show that he was unarmed. He gave the group some fishing hooks and performed 'many antics and grimaces as a buffoon'. This technique of greeting had been used during many encounters over the years, including by the naturalist and geologist Joseph Beete Jukes on the *Fly*.[40] Having successfully established communications, he attempted without success to ascertain the local name for the sandalwood tree. After this peaceful encounter the two parties went their separate ways with the white men making a 'scramble' back towards the beach. They soon found themselves surrounded again. MacGillivray grimly noted that the danger now became far more pressing. At least, he noted, '*our* cowards were all a long way ahead…'.[41] The traders kept their progress up in an attempt to reach the relative safety of the beach and their boats. The Aboriginal men encouraged the traders to take a route further to the left explaining to MacGillivray that this would lead them back to their boats. To the discomfort of the rest of the party MacGillivray followed their lead but kept on guard for signs of treachery:

> By dint of keeping the Australians in good humour, laughing away as if unconcerned, and betraying no sign of fear (although for my own part I admit having been very apprehensive as to the result), at the same time keeping close to an elderly gentleman whom I had selected as the first victim should hostilities commence, we got on pretty well until an opening in the scrub allowed us to see the beach not more than a quarter of a mile off.[42]

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[36] MacGillivray, 'Wanderings in tropical Australia No.II', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 January 1862, 4.
[37] Now more commonly now known as Rainbow Lorikeets.
[38] MacGillivray, *Journal I*, 18 August 1860.
[39] MacGillivray, 'Wanderings in tropical Australia No.II', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 January 1862, 4.
[40] Mullins, *Torres Strait'*, 24.
[41] MacGillivray, 'Wanderings in tropical Australia No.II', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 January 1862, 4.
[42] *Ibid*

Had the party taken the route they had initially chosen, they would have ended up a mile off their desired destination. Upon reaching the beach all of MacGillivray's fears evaporated. Everything had gone smoothly back at the boats – the only loss had been of a dog that had been brought off the ship. MacGillivray commented callously that he 'only wished the cats and women had been with it'.[43] The traders enticed around sixty of the men to come to their boats and accept gifts of biscuit, calico and knives and the two groups parted in a friendly manner. After a hurried dinner the traders attempted to make it back to the brig but found the conditions against them. They ended by spending a fireless and watchful night on the beach under a sail before being able to return to the *Julia Percy* on the following day.

This incident is a clear demonstration of MacGillivray's status on board the brig as an authority when it came to dealing with the local inhabitants. The Captain and crew of the *Julia Percy* were not the only ones to regard him as such. MacGillivray's observations on interactions with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were important to a colony that was setting its sights on establishing permanent settlements in the far north of Australia. MacGillivray's *Narrative of HMS Rattlesnake* was an essential reference work for any officials or colonists interested in the northern part of the country. Settlers were particularly interested in the opportunities presented with the opening up of new pastoral settlements in the new Colony of Queensland, officially proclaimed on 6 June 1859. The *Julia Percy* was made aware of the growth of the new colony when, to the surprise of all on board, the pilot from Port Denison boarded the brig in 1861. The town of Bowen had been established in April of that year, a settlement MacGillivray stated:

> ...the locality of which was altogether unknown to such of us as had heard of its existence. For myself I was amazed to learn that so young a colony as Queensland had pushed one of her frontier outposts thus far, 150 miles within the tropic.[44]

MacGillivray's surprise at the extent of settlement in the new colony of Queensland is perhaps ironic given the, admittedly small, part that his own writings and experience could be said to have played in this development. MacGillivray's observations were some of the more authoritative available to colonial officials and other interested parties. The depth of his experience gave him insights into the developments and customs in the region that were unavailable to other, less experienced, travellers.

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[43] MacGillivray, *Journal I*, 18 August 1860.

[44] John MacGillivray, 'Wanderings in tropical Australia No.IX. Torres Strait Cruise Continued', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 February 1862, 4.

As MacGillivray implied in the first of his *Wanderings*, general knowledge of the Torres Strait and northern Australia was sketchy at best. In the Torres Strait in particular previous violent encounters had led to wariness and fear on the part of colonists. The level of contact with traders and other passing vessels varied considerably between islands in the Torres Strait. Encounters varied considerably, at times proving to be peaceful and on other occasions disastrous.[45] Islanders in the north-eastern group had been exposed to the most frequent contact. Regular contact was not made until the late 1860s on the islands furthest north such as Saibai and Dauan. These brief trading encounters provide a glimpse into the complex interactions that occurred on this maritime frontier. The short-term encounters during this era can be seen from both the islander and trader perspective as situations of ongoing negotiation and education. During this 'passing trade'[46] era, as trading systems were set in place, the understanding of cultural and trade protocols increased on both sides making conflict less likely. This meant that a growing appreciation by Europeans of expected modes of behaviour was as crucial to the development of a peaceful trading relationship as was the Islanders' appreciation of the possible advantages to be gained from trade with these passing vessels.[47] Hence MacGillivray's observation that, although the *Julia Percy* herself had experienced nothing but peaceful trading:

> It was far otherwise even within my own recollection, but I suppose more frequent intercourse with ships during late years has taught them the policy of being peaceable, for they are a shrewd set of people, and quite alive to whatever is advantageous to themselves.[48]

MacGillivray's statement failed to acknowledge that the traders, and MacGillivray himself, were also learning how to conduct themselves in these encounters. It was, however, the common belief for many years that it was the education of the Torres Strait Islanders and their hunger for produce that would ensure peace. There was a widespread belief that increased commerce would be the key to spreading civilisation throughout the region.[49] MacGillivray's associates, Captains Edwards and Banner, were to play a major role in establishing permanent stations in the Torres Strait in the mid to late 1860s – capitalizing on the knowledge and experience gained during the voyage of the *Julia Percy*. Edwards, MacGillivray's friend, conducted various trading ventures in the region throughout the 1860s. A comment by him in a letter to Towns, in a similar vein to that of MacGillivray's, reveals the above attitude was widespread:

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[45] Mullins, *Torres Strait*, 20.

[46] The 'passing trade' phase is used by Mullins, 'The Torres-Strait Beche-de-Mer Fishery: A Question of Timing', *The Great Circle*, 14, 1 (1992): 22.

[47] Ian J. McNiven, 'Torres Strait Islanders and the maritime frontier in early colonial Australia' in Lynette Russell (ed), *Colonial Frontiers – Indigenous European encounters in settler societies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 189.

[48] John MacGillivray, 'Wanderings in tropical Australia No.VIII. Torres Strait Cruise Continued', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 February 1862, 4.

> I am glad to notice these commercial tendencies, and appreciation of the value of property as I look upon them as material guarantees for their keeping the peace towards us...[50]

Trade and peaceful relations were key issues in northern Australia. Agitation concerning the establishment of some kind of station situated on Cape York remained a key issue throughout the colony and MacGillivray's writings and observations played a key part in this. The settlement at Somerset was established in 1864 just two years after the appearance of MacGillivray's latest articles on the region. It is clear that MacGillivray's *Narrative* was read thoroughly by John Jardine, first Police Magistrate at Somerset, as he set about establishing the settlement.[51] The settlement of Cardwell in Rockingham Bay was established the same year. These two new ports would provide safe refuges for the crews of ships wrecked in the area as well as opportunities for vessels to water and obtain supplies.[52] Despite the depth of MacGillivray's knowledge, his observations and accounts of the people of the Torres Strait and Cape York are now considered to be misleading in many cases.[53] At the time, however, his accounts were the best that residents of the colonies of Australia could hope for and the wanderings of the *Julia Percy* should be considered within this context.

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[49] Nicholas Thomas, *In Oceania: Visions, Artifacts, Histories* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997), 148.

[50] Edwards to Towns, 5 September 1864, Towns & Co Papers, 1856-1881, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, MS307, 173a.

[51] John Jardine, 'Description of the Neighbourhood of Somerset, Cape York, Australia', *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, 36 (1866): 76-85. Regarding zoology Jardine notes 'In the zoology of the district the careful researches of Mr McGillivray [sic], the naturalist attached to Her Majesty's surveying-ship Rattlesnake, have left little room for the discovery of many positive novelties', (78). Re natives 'A very accurate vocabulary of their language has been published by Mr McGillivray in his account of the voyage of H.M.S. Rattlesnake', (83). Jardine was another who expressed his belief that greater contact would lead to more peaceful encounters 'I think that the simple fact of a settlement of Europeans being established at Cape York will very much tend to curb the savage natures of the natives...', (84). MacGillivray comments in a letter to E.P. Ramsay on April 15 1866, that Jardine may have read his report a little too closely. MacGillivray alleged that Jardine had taken nearly the whole of his report to the colonial secretary from an old published one of his – at times almost verbatim.

[52] Sir George Bowen, 'Notes on the New Settlement of Somerset, near Cape York', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, Vol. 9 No. 2 (1865): 77.

[53] Mullins, *Torres Strait*, 24.

Upon the *Julia Percy*'s return to Night Island it was discovered that the beche-de-mere operations had not met with success and so on 23 August the traders moved around ten miles leeward to the Sherrard Isles. They searched the reefs for beche-de-mer and the neighbouring mainland for sandalwood, again without success, and so decided to make their way back to their base at Lizard Island.

The voyage was long and tedious. MacGillivray took the opportunity to correct errors in the Directory and made this the subject of some of his *Wanderings* in the interest of increasing the safety of navigation through this part of the world. Collecting continued with fish and shells being obtained and prepared on most days. On the Claremont Isles numbers of flying foxes were shot and eaten. MacGillivray noted that on one of the isles hundreds of thousands of these bats passed the brig in two broad streams. 'Before witnessing this wonderful sight I could scarcely have imagined that the whole world contained so many of these creatures…', he wrote.[54]

Experiments were also carried out on board the brig and woe betide any animal that crossed the *Julia Percy's* path. On Pelican Island the crew took the opportunity to kill around thirty-five of the birds, which they boiled down to extract their oil. Captain Banner declared it better for the binnacle lamp than sperm oil. MacGillivray found it useful as an external application in cases of rheumatism. Turtles were also killed, both hawksbill and green, and their nests dug up and eggs removed. Fishing for sharks and porpoises provided an additional source of entertainment as the *Julia Percy* made her way through the islands. One of the ill-fated porpoises was served over a number of days as meat-balls, steaks and sausages. Although the taste was not to MacGillivray's liking he was pleased to have the head to prepare and add to his collection.[55] The sharks were also put to good use. As well as providing food their livers were boiled down – one large shark produced eight gallons of burning oil.[56] Later in the voyage near the Hope Isles, sixty Torres Strait pigeons were shot in a single day and made a welcome addition to the meals on board. These excursions in search of extra provisions were sometimes hazardous – in particular a number of the crew were stung by sting-rays on the reefs. The agony produced by these stings, MacGillivray told his Sydney readers, was intense. He treated the individuals by administering large does of laudanum or muriate of morphia – as large a dose as three grains. MacGillivray adds

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[54] MacGillivray, *Journal I*, 28 August 1860.
[55] MacGillivray, *Journal I*, 5 September 1860.
[56] John MacGillivray, 'Wanderings in tropical Australia No.V. First Southern Cruise continued', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 January 1862, 4.

'but not being a legally qualified practitioner, I had better add no more, else I may come under the official notice of the "Medical Board of New South Wales"'.[57]

When the *Julia Percy* reached Lizard Island on 17 September, having taken twenty-four days to cover a distance of 180 miles, they found that none of the vessels scheduled to visit the depot had arrived and that beche-de-mer processing had been conducted with little vigour. Those left on the island had separated into two parties – the first consisted of four white men – Howell, Crawley, Jack Dill and Stuttering Billy along with two women and four 'natives'. The second comprised two white men – Long Jack and Long Bob (Robert Simpson) with their two women and 'natives'. Some effort had been put into making the island station more habitable. A large stone building was well underway,[58] a new bridge had been constructed and a garden enclosed. MacGillivray's garden, he noted sadly, had been torn apart by pigs during his absence.[59]

Upon his return MacGillivray set about papering boxes and packing specimens. This was his first consignment from the Torres Strait Expedition and was to be sent to Captain Edwards at Port de France before being transmitted to Edwards' agent in London for sale.[60] For MacGillivray at least, the cruise had been profitable.

After a stay on Lizard Island of only a few days MacGillivray and Banner set off again, this time anchoring near the Rocky Islets and a reef around ten miles from Cape Flattery. For a fortnight they set about an intense and successful beche-de-mer operation. By MacGillivray's reckoning they managed to clear the reef of the 'fish'[61] within an area of five or six miles.[62]

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[57] *Ibid*

[58] A stone structure still stands in Watson's Bay. The Watson family were said to have adapted one of the structures made by the crew of the Julia Percy as their home. Mrs Watson fled from Lizard Island along with her baby and Chinese servant when their home was attacked by 'natives'. The three escaped in a trying pot but died of thirst. Mrs Watson's diary is held in the State Library of QLD. Mary Watson (1860–1881) Diary fragments '3-11 September', 1881 OM81–120/2 John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland.

[59] MacGillivray, *Journal I*, 17 September 1860.

[60] MacGillivray, *Journal II. September 18 1860 to December 4 1860 "Torres Strait Expedition"*, Australian National Maritime Museum, Sydney, 21 September 1860.

[61] The beche-de-mer traders refer to their harvest as 'fish' technically beche-de-mer are actually Echinoderm of the class Holothuroidea. They are also often called sea cucumbers. Beche-de-mer operations today in the Torres Strait still refer to 'fish' classing their catches under the following subdivisions - surf redfish (*Actinopyga mauritiana*), black teatfish (*Holothuria whitmaei*), white teatfish (*Holothuria fuscogilva*). I will continue to use the term 'fish' throughout this chapter.

[62] John MacGillivray, 'Wanderings in tropical Australia No.IV. First Southern Cruise', *Sydney Morning Herald,* 25 January 1862, 4.

The beche-de-mer trade had long been a profitable sideline for sandalwood traders.[63] As a companion trade it began to take on added significance as supply of the precious wood began to dwindle. The three types of 'fish', as they were called, sought by the *Julia Percy's* crew in order of their value were teat fish, small black fish and small red fish. These, MacGillivray states, would fetch £30, £20 and £15 per ton respectively although their market price could be far higher.[64] The teat fish was the largest variety. A small collecting bag would carry approximately 15 fish however when dried the same bag would fit around 90. MacGillivray estimated that it took approximately 8000 to 8700 of these fish to make a ton and would take around 18,650 of the small red fish to make the same weight.[65] The collecting took place at low tide. Boats would move out across the reef picking the fish out of the shallow water. The cargo was considered dangerous as once the boats were heavily laden they became difficult to manage and could not be lightened quickly if trouble occurred.[66]

MacGillivray painted a vivid and detailed picture for his Sydney readers of the processing station. His description detailed the complex routine required and emphasised the labour intensive nature of the operation.[67] MacGillivray estimated that the process would entail each fish being handled between six to twenty times.[68]The fish took between four and seven days to cure on the batters, all the time being carefully shifted to ensure that each batch would receive the correct amount of heat. Once off the batter they would be dried further in the sun before being bagged ready for shipment.

On 10 October after the reefs had been cleared the *Julia Percy's* crew went in search of more beche-de-mer on the Two Isles but were disappointed. They moved off and on 18 October anchored near the entrance to the Endeavour River where they landed in an attempt to find water. After successfully procuring water the party was pleasantly surprised to locate a small stand of sandalwood – as it would transpire, the one successful sandalwood find of the entire Torres Strait Expedition. A sample tree was taken on board and cleaned and judged of sufficient quality to warrant taking what could be found from the area. Around thirty trees were considered large enough to take but the work was difficult – in order to get to the valuable roots of the tree it was necessary to dig to a depth of around five feet.[69] A load of around one ton of wood was finally procured and prepared. In her examination of the pearl-shelling industry Regina Ganter has labelled the south-pacific traders as 'resource-raiders'.[70] The *Julia Percy's* clearing of the reefs of beche-de-mer and the total destruction of the stand of sandalwood are two clear examples of this particularly destructive mode of operation.

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[63] Shineberg, *They Came for Sandalwood*, 111.

[64] MacGillivray, 'Wanderings in tropical Australia No.IV', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 January 1862, 4. However an Erratum is printed in Wanderings V as in IV they had accidentally transposed small red fish with small black fish.

[65] *Ibid*

[66] *Ibid*

[67] *Ibid*

[68] *Ibid*

Throughout the cruise MacGillivray made the most of the time spent aboard the brig to supplement his fish collection. Members of the crew gave some fish to him and he spent many hours with a line cast over the edge attempting to build this aspect of his collection. He was well pleased with the results of his labours. On October 28 he noted that he already had 41 specimens made up of 28 species and that he hoped to make the number up to 50 as the first instalment of his collection.[71]

Another element of MacGillivray's collection on which he concentrated was expanding his Australian Aboriginal word lists. Encounters on this particular cruise were minimal, short and relatively peaceful. MacGillivray attempted on each occasion to add to his vocabularies and check for regional variation. In particular MacGillivray quizzed each of his informants regarding their name for the sandalwood tree but could find no evidence that any of those he spoke to had one. On one occasion MacGillivray traded a butchers knife and a handkerchief with an old man in exchange for words. This old man, MacGillivray noted, held considerable authority among the group. For his Sydney readers MacGillivray observed that the concept of a chief among Australian Aboriginal groups had not been established but that elders such as this were often held in high regard. This was a topic of great interest to anthropologists and ethnographers throughout the Empire. Along with colour, social organisation was one way in which different races were ranked in terms of their state of development.[72] Different races were rated and ranked on a scale of primitive through to civilized on the basis of such things as colour, social organization and their response to European contact – in particular trade.[73]

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[69] MacGillivray, 'Wanderings in tropical Australia No.V', *Sydney Morning Herald,* 29 January 1862, 4.
[70] Regina Ganter, *The Pearl-Shellers of the Torres Strait – Resource use, Development and Decline, 1860s-1960s* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1994), 17.
[71] MacGillivray, *Journal II,* 28 October 1860.
[72] Thomas, *In Oceania,* 133.
[73] Thomas, *In Oceania,* 144-145. See also Bronwen Douglas and Chris Ballard (eds*), Foreign Bodies: Oceania and the science of race 1750-1940* (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2008), 12.

Although the encounters went smoothly MacGillivray also observed that it was always necessary in such situations to be on guard for trouble. He wrote:

> There were many beautiful spots here, where I would gladly have sat and gazed for hours together at the lilies, and, thinking on such matters as would readily become associated with them, at length have arisen no worse a man than before and perhaps a better one, but that cursed phantom of the Australian unsettled country, the never knowing that one has not his every motion watched by the prowling savage ever on the alert to catch him unawares and spear him, deterred me for I was alone, and had to be watchful. Under such circumstances precaution has long been habitual and I have great confidence in myself when alone, and not hampered by others.[74]

On 4 November the *Julia Percy* returned to Lizard Island. MacGillivray bitterly noted:

> None of the several vessels which were to have joined us had arrived [sic], although one of them, the Black Dog, was daily expected; but I may state in anticipation, she never came. The Spec, brig, with a partial cargo of Eromanga sandal-wood, had called here on her way to Batavia to land some provisions, and take away the produce. She, too, was to call here in January on her way back, but of course never made her second appearance, as that would have invalidated the fact, long-suspected and eventually proved, that a total disregard of all promises was the chief characteristic of the "Torres Strait Expedition."[75]

Four deaths had occurred while they had been away and morale on the island was low. Captain Paddon had put off his promised visit to the station until the following May. The crew of the *Julia Percy* immediately went ashore and made the most of plentiful alcohol. Fighting and arguments broke out and Captain Banner was forced to exert his authority. By this stage of the venture matters on board the *Julia Percy* were serious. The white crew was close to mutiny and it was only the strict discipline enforced by Banner that held things together. The voyage was not proving as successful as the white crew had anticipated. The arrangement of being paid 'on the lay', in this case equating to a sixtieth share of the produce for a member of the crew such as a foremast hand was not going to satisfy their wants. This method of payment was a common one for such voyages. MacGillivray grimly noted that Banner remained resolute –'they had voluntarily chosen the "Julia Percy" for better or for worse, and it was now too late to repent of their bargain.'[76]

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[74] MacGillivray, *Journal II*, 31 October 1860.
[75] MacGillivray, 'Wanderings in tropical Australia No.V', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 January 1862, 4.
[76] *Ibid*

The stay on Lizard Island was brief. During the *Julia Percy*'s absence the *Spec* had brought news of a wreck five or six miles to the north of Raine Islet. The aim of the next cruise was thus determined first to see what could be salvaged from the wreck, an objective MacGillivray chose to omit from his *Sydney Morning Herald* series,[77] and second, to obtain tortoise shell from the people in the Torres Strait. They had no chart of the area but the chronometer was brought on board and MacGillivray, somewhat reluctantly, agreed to navigate for Banner 'for the benefit of his owner, and my friend, Capt. Paddon.'[78]

Banner's first task was to restore order and discipline on board his ship. The drunken spree of the last few days was brought to a forcible end and the unhappy crew once more brought to heel. Once order had been established the *Julia Percy* set a course northward. The first trading took place at an anchorage near Haggerston Island which was reached on 13 November. Two canoes approached the ship with three men in each. They proved eager to trade a small amount of tortoise shell for tobacco. MacGillivray noted that:

> A great change has come over these people since the days of the Fly and Bramble. So eager were they for tobacco and pipes, that one of them immediately set to work in his canoe and was soon "blowing a cloud" of smoke.[79]

The following morning the same group brought off a further 10 lbs of tortoise shell auguring well for future trading. The Captain of the *Spec* had informed Banner that the provisions from the wreck had been landed on the Sir Charles Hardy Islands to the southwest of Raine Islet. A large party from the *Julia Percy* landed on the southernmost island of the group and searched, but could find no trace of the provisions although there were signs of recent European visits. Searches on subsequent days found a single iron tray from the ship's galley. Slow progress was then made towards Raine Islet to see what could be salvaged from the wreck itself. Boats were sent out and managed to bring off a large anchor and some copper but the winds were against the *Julia Percy* and all attempts to get close to Raine Islet were in vain. It was finally decided to abandon the attempt and to make for Cape York.

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[77] John MacGillivray, 'Wanderings in tropical Australia No.VI. Torres Strait Cruise', *Sydney Morning Herald,* 7 February 1862, 4. MacGillivray simply states 'For a variety of reasons not necessary to be specified, Captain B. resolved at this time to pay an exploratory visit to Torres Strait, with a view to ascertain by actual experience what amount of tortoise-shell could there be calculated upon, should future circumstances induce the owners to push that trade in a smaller and more suitable vessel.'

[78] MacGillivray, *Journal II,* 6 November 1860.

[79] *Ibid,* 13 November 1860.

The *Julia Percy* took a route up past the Bird Isles, Hannibal Island and Cairncross Island before rounding Albany rock and finally anchoring between Sextant Rock and Ida Island in Evans Bay, Cape York on 1 December. MacGillivray breathed a sigh of relief. The responsibility for their navigation through the islands had weighed heavily upon him – more heavily, he felt, than any responsibility had done before in his life. The lack of charts and the quality of the vessel had made for an uncomfortable journey. MacGillivray wrote:

> There is the additional discomfort of knowing that nearly every white person on board – except the Captain – attributes this northern cruise to me, and bears towards me no good will. They speak contemptuously of me and at me (though not to my face, except by one man once when drunk) and even have introduced me into several songs in no very flattering manner – and these doleful ditties they sing in chores every night.[80]

MacGillivray felt that the chief concern of the crew was that the six months that they had originally signed up for had nearly expired. Unfortunately the expedition had been, thus far, so unsuccessful that it was inevitable that their term of service would be greatly extended. Having had the navigation entrusted to him meant that some of the blame now extended to MacGillivray personally – blame he felt keenly.

Upon reaching Evans Bay MacGillivray spoke to some Aboriginal men that had come off in a canoe. On giving the name Dzoka, by which he was formerly known, he was recognised as a friend of Paida. Paida had been MacGillivray's chief informant in the area during the voyage of the *Rattlesnake*. Two days later Paida made his appearance on shore – at this point in MacGillivray's adventures a friendly face would have been most welcome. MacGillivray had spent considerable time with Paida during the *Rattlesnake*'s visit to Cape York in 1848 and 1849. As well as providing assistance with vocabularies Paida had guided MacGillivray throughout the region and assisted him in procuring a range of specimens for his collection.

Paida, MacGillivray and Banner went shooting. MacGillivray hoped to secure a magnificent rifle-bird (*Ptiloris magnifica)*, which he eventually did. Banner was more concerned to secure a good water supply and after making this clear, much to MacGillivray's disgust, the hunt for specimens took second place to this more pressing demand. MacGillivray did however manage to secure a Paradise Kingfisher along the way. These two birds, skinned when he returned to the boat in the evening, along with three brush Turkey eggs and six snails that were brought on board for him on the following day by Paida made MacGillivray feel that the day had been a success.

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[80] *Ibid*, 1 December 1860.

MacGillivray spent the following days drawing up a chart for the Torres Strait between Mt Ernest and Darnley Island using the Admiralty Directory, as the intention was to travel in search of tortoise shell as soon as the weather permitted. On 12 December they set out for Mt Ernest. The following 19 days were spent in a cruise amongst the islands of the Torres Strait on the hunt for tortoise shell.

By the 1860s the people of the Torres Strait were seasoned traders. They had a long established trading system in place with groups in New Guinea with whom pearl shell, the major source of wealth in the Torres Strait, was traded for numerous items but most significantly, for canoes. Trees from New Guinea were large enough to form sea-going canoes, essential to the maritime people of the Torres Strait.[81] Trading also took place with Australians - most significantly from Cape York - according to some, stretching as far down as Cape Granville.[82] Australians have been classified as fringe participants in this trading network with the key interaction being this trade between the Kaurareg of the Prince of Wales group and the Gudang people of Cape York.[83] Items such as red ochre and spears were sought after items from the Islanders' Australian neighbours. White traders had operated throughout the Strait since the 1820s. These traders were mostly engaged in the whaling industries but would also have been collecting tortoise shell when the opportunity arose. There is some debate as to when beche-de-mer stations were established in the Strait. It is proposed by some that stations were established in the 1840s however evidence for this is not strong.[84] Mullins suggests that it was not until the 1860s that permanent stations were established in the area with Captains such as Banner leading the way. Mullins argues that this delay of twenty years is crucial as, unlike vessels in the area in the 1840s, the crews arriving in the 1860s were largely made up of Pacific Islanders who were to go on to have such an impact on the society and culture of the Torres Strait.[85] The voyage of the *Julia Percy* can thus be seen to have a special significance for the future of the entire region.

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[81] Mullins, *Torres Strait,* 13.

[82] *Ibid,* 12.

[83] David R. Moore, 'Cape York Aborigines: Fringe Participants in the Torres Strait Trading System', *Mankind,* 11, 3 June (1978): 319.

[84] John Singe, *The Torres Strait: people and history,* (St Lucia, QLD: University of Queensland Press, 1989), 31.

[85] Mullins, 'The Torres-Strait Beche-de-Mer Fishery', 27.

From a collecting perspective MacGillivray attempted to make the most of this next stage of the journey by setting a dredge for the first time. Over several days he was able to procure a number of shells for his collection. However, for the next three weeks MacGillivray's collecting took second place to his navigating, guiding and trading responsibilities.

On 15 December the *Julia Percy* anchored off Mount Ernest Island. In the afternoon a large canoe with seven or eight people came off and a small amount of tortoise shell was obtained in exchange for tobacco. On the following day more unusual items were purchased including tortoise shell masks, weapons, four English half crowns and a roman copper coin. These last items, MacGillivray thought, were probably taken from the crew of the *Sapphire,* who had been killed the previous year at the Prince of Wales group. MacGillivray was also successful at Mount Ernest in his hunt for words. He quizzed all of the visitors to the ship and spent time on shore acquiring additions to his vocabulary. By the end of the visit he had obtained over 100 words on which he felt he could depend. His one frustration was his inability, despite all his ingenuity and perseverance, to obtain any numerals.

Echoes of MacGillivray's past were also present during this encounter – one of those in the canoe wore a sailor's hat with HMS *Herald* on the ribbon. MacGillivray little realised how close he had come to his former shipmates. Just two months previously the *Herald* had spent a full week at anchor at nearby Hammond (Keriri) Island from 23 October until 2 November. The *Herald* was finally making its return voyage to England after a period of eight years stationed in Australia. It had departed from Sydney on 17 August 1860 and had commenced a journey up the Australian coast on its way to Surabaya, Indonesia.[86] The *Julia Percy* and the *Herald* would have passed each other around 17 or 18 September as the small trading vessel limped its way along the coast to Lizard Island and the *Herald* sailed majestically through the outer route and up towards Raine Island Entrance. While the *Herald* was at anchor at Hammond Island the Kaurareg people visited and happy exchanges took place between them and the crew. Denham recorded in his journal:

> They would immediately put on any garments given to them, much to our amusement, but without laughing at each other, however grotesque Jack would delight in making them appear. A hat of any sort or colour, with or with-out a crown, or brim, trimmed with shavings, strew or rope yarns would be worn all that

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[86] Andrew David, *The Voyage of HMS Herald / to Australia and the South-west Pacific 1852-1861 under the command of Captain Henry Mangles Denham* (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press at the Miegunyah Press, 1995), 403.

> visit and while paddling to shore, without embarrassment, though the next morning they would appear in their primitive state, reserving it might be, the disfiguring garb for a 'Cooroboree' with their distant tribe...[87]

Denham mused over how the visit of the *Herald* would be talked of by the 'natives' for many years. One wonders how MacGillivray would have enjoyed hearing of his former shipmates visit especially in light of his present company and the vessel in which he was now sailing.

Along with natural history specimens and working on his vocabularies MacGillivray was interested in developing collections in other areas. During this visit to Mt Ernest MacGillivray took the opportunity of furthering his collection of human skulls. On the first excursion onshore in exchange for a piece of tobacco, he purchased the skull of a Mulgrave islander who had been killed in a conflict. He ran into difficulties however when he attempted to purchase what he considered a far finer skull that had been decorated with diamond-shaped pieces of mother-of-pearl in the sockets of the eyes and had an artificial nose. He had been told that this particular item had been taken and hidden in the bush but that he would be able to obtain it presently. Having waited patiently without hearing anything further about the possible purchase he asked an individual to go and get the skull for him at which point he was told 'that it was his father's head, and that I should not get it for any amount of tobacco!'[88] MacGillivray ruefully recorded that he had addressed himself to the one person in the group to whom the transaction was not acceptable.

Human skulls were items much sought after by naturalists, collectors and museums. The first well-documented instance of the purchase of a skull occurred during the voyage of the *Fly* when Captain Blackwood obtained a skull from Mer (Murray Island) in exchange for a piece of tobacco.[89] There are a number of specific references to the purchase of skulls within MacGillivray's writings while employed on board the *Julia Percy* and the surveying vessels *Rattlesnake* and *Herald.* In Oswald Brierly's painting of '*Landing and Barter with Natives Darnley Island*' from the 1849 visit of the *Rattlesnake* an islander can be seen in the foreground wading out to the boats with a skull raised up in the air.[90] MacGillivray makes frequent references to his continued collecting in the area during this later period. His natural history notebook for this period has two specific references to the sale of skulls –

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[87] David, *The Voyage of HMS Herald,* 410.

[88] John MacGillivray, 'Wanderings in tropical Australia No.VII. Torres Strait Cruise Continued', *Sydney Morning Herald,* 14 February 1862, 4.

[89] Mullins, *Torres Strait,* 29.

[90] Oswald W.B. Brierly, *New Guinea coast and Cape York area during the voyage of H.M.S. Rattlesnake, ca. 1849-1850,* Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, a511057.

one case sent to Cuming in London in 1862 and, also from 1862, a note of prices for items offered for sale to the Australian Museum in Sydney in which he notes that human skulls should fetch £2.2.0 each. Collections of skulls were held in museums in Australia and abroad and the demand for these items continued long after MacGillivray's voyaging through the region.[91] Skulls of all descriptions were in demand as anatomical as well as anthropological and phrenological curiosities.

Trading in tortoise shell was however the first concern of all of those on board the *Julia Percy* on this particular cruise in 1860. The journey took the brig on a path through the islands from Mt Ernest to Darnley Island. Encounters with the islanders were numerous. MacGillivray's accounts of the trading proceedings clearly demonstrate the central place that trade held in the islands and the way in which islanders used the visits of vessels such as the *Julia Percy* in order to extend their trading boundaries and systems. The *Julia Percy* was only one of many vessels to be plying the trade in tortoise shell by this time.[92] The islanders, MacGillivray wrote, were at times 'frantic with eagerness' to commence trading.[93] Tomahawks, axe heads and metal knives of any description were the items most in demand, far more than the other staple trading item of tobacco. However, even yams were items on which the Islanders placed a significant value and for which drove a hard bargain. MacGillivray noted one occasion when a sprouting yam which was offered in exchange for an axe and could not be purchased for anything less.[94]

MacGillivray's writings are a clear demonstration of the way in which trade with Europeans increased the wealth of various communities throughout the region and was a central part of existence for people in the Torres Strait by the 1860s.[95] While the trade depicted by MacGillivray fits a number of the stereotypes typical of such accounts of barter and exchange, there are important differences to note. In his analysis of the allure of barter, Nicholas Thomas has written that one of the popular myths of trade is that the primitive natives are often depicted as being 'desperate to acquire European tools and trinkets – so much so that they are prepared to give away any or all of their own property to acquire things which were worthless or overvalued'.[96] It is clear from accounts such as MacGillivray's that while the islanders were keen to acquire European goods they were well aware of the price they would accept in exchange.

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[91] The Macleay museum held a large number of skulls, many collected by William Macleay. see N.W.G. Macintosh, 'Crania in the Macleay Museum', *Proceedings of the Linnean Society of NSW*, Vol. LXXIV (1949): 161-191. Macleay also collected a mummified male at Darnley Island in 1875, which he exhibited in his private museum when he returned to Sydney. See Graeme Pretty, 'The Macleay Museum Mummy from Torres Straits: A postscript to Elliot Smith and the Diffusion Controversy', *Man*, New Series, 4, 1 (March 1969): 26.
[92] Mullins, *The Torres Strait*, 27.
[93] John MacGillivray, *Journal III. December 5 1860 to February 18 1861 "Torres Strait Expedition"*, Australian National Maritime Museum, Sydney, 22 December 1860. Also, MacGillivray, 'Wanderings in tropical Australia No.VIII', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 February 1862, 4.
[94] MacGillivray, 'Wanderings in tropical Australia No.VIII', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 February 1862, 4.
[95] Mullins, *The Torres Strait*, 27.

At Darnley Island around 50 lbs of tortoise shell was obtained, the single most successful transaction of the voyage. A large axe cost the islanders between ten to twelve pieces of shell depending on size and quality. MacGillivray noted that the Darnley islanders kept a close eye on the trade – passing pieces up one by one attempting to see for how little they could buy an axe. Tobacco would only be traded for smaller pieces of shell, wigs, masks, ornaments, coconuts and bananas.[97] MacGillivray's frustration with his companions was still evident. When listing the more curious items available for trade he noted that a dog was also on offer:

> ...fortunately it was not brought on board, as with pigs, and black heathen prostitutes, to say nothing of the mongrel dirty yellow bastard, there are nuisances enough on board, although to be sure the pigs may be tolerated, being useful, which the others are not.[98]

MacGillivray also purchased skulls at Darnley Island. One of these MacGillivray later soaked in a well, cleaned off the skin, and removed the sham eyes and false nose making it 'respectable enough for an anatomical museum'.[99] There is some debate as to whether skulls were a traditional item of trade. While human skulls were a desirable commodity to the visiting Europeans, the willingness of the Islanders to part with skeletal remains confirmed them as savages in the visitor's eyes.[100] Not all skulls were made available to the visitors. It would appear that the skulls obtained by whites were those of people who had been dead for a considerable period – it has since been documented that this meant that the spiritual and emotional significance of the items was greatly reduced in the eyes of the islanders.[101] The contradiction implied in the request for skulls and the subsequent condemnation upon their supply is evident in MacGillivray's own writings. In his account of the purchase of two skulls from the Darnley Islanders he comments that a number of human heads were brought off for sale 'dangling from the rail of the platform'. 'To be sure' he admits, 'I had asked them to get me *kirrim netat*, or *one* skull expecting that it would be brought off privately in a basket.' A private transaction, conducted in an appropriately modest way was obviously acceptable but this open trading degraded the people in MacGillivray's eyes and through him the eyes of his Sydney readers. MacGillivray's shipmates were also not pleased at his skulls coming on board – with their mother of pearl eyes and noses made of pitch they frightened his superstitious companions.[102]

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[96] Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge; Massachusetts, London: Harvard University Press, 1991), 84.
[97] MacGillivray, 'Wanderings in tropical Australia No.VIII', *Sydney Morning Herald,* 21 February 1862, 4.
[98] MacGillivray, *Journal III,* 28 December 1860.
[99] John MacGillivray, *Journal IV. February 19 1861 to October 16 1861 "Torres Strait Expedition" (Stay at Lizard Island),* Australian National Maritime Museum, Sydney.
[100] Mullins, *Torres Strait,* 29.
[101] *Ibid*

From Darnley Island the *Julia Percy* worked its way back through the islands of the Torres Strait visiting Dalrymple Island, Rennel Island, Masden Island and Coconut Island. On 3 January they set a course for Cape York. In the afternoon the *Julia Percy* reached Mt Adolphus and, the ebb tide being against them, they decided that it was useless to attempt to get across to Evans bay and so dropped anchor for the night.

In the morning Paida arrived, crossing from Albany Island along with a number of other men. MacGillivray delivered him a bamboo pipe and bowl from Mt Ernest that he had promised him and Paida repaid this kindness with some Megapodius eggs that MacGillivray had requested. This visit would be their last encounter – in 1865 John Jardine reported that Paida had been killed a short while before by the neighbouring 'Kororegas' (Kaurareg), from the Prince of Wales Island[103] bringing an end to this mutually profitable and interesting relationship.

That afternoon they crossed into an anchorage in Port Albany in a snug little cove off Albany Island. The following day the ship's carpenter set about making an axle for the ship's wheel - a task that had the *Julia Percy* at anchor for a period of ten days. This delay in returning to Lizard Island gave MacGillivray the opportunity to renew his collecting efforts in one of his most profitable locations. 'A collecting naturalist' he wrote, 'could here be kept in continual and profitable employment for many months judging from what fell to my lot during the few occasions on which I landed at this time.'[104]

Those 'few occasions' were in fact seven collecting trips during which specimens of bats, birds, shells and plants were obtained. On the two days he stayed on board the vessel specimens were sent off to him – taken either by 'natives' or by Captain Banner. The days were full and busy – collecting, preparing and packing specimens. On 7 January he recorded in his journal:

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[102] MacGillivray, *Journal III,* 27 December 1860. MacGillivray notes that they were brought on board 'to the annoyance and terror of some of my miserable superstitious wretches on board – white and black'.

[103] Jardine, 'Description of the Neighborhood of Somerset', 82.

[104] John MacGillivray, 'Wanderings in tropical Australia No.X. Torres Strait Cruise Continued', *Sydney Morning Herald,* 27 March 1862, 4.

> The skipper went on shore again with his gun. When the first boat returned he sent me a quantity of more eggs of Tanysiptera, also some of two other small birds and a live Tanysiptera in good plumage but draggled with having been in the water. I put the bird out in the sun, and when completely dried, killed and skinned him. Blowing Eggs. Found the arsenic had failed to preserve the bats which were utterly spoiled so I threw them away. In the evening when the Capt. returned he brought with him a fine male rifle bird and a podargus I skinned the former without delay and reserved the other until the morning. A few such days as this of valuable collecting will make up for many black days and weeks. [105]

These treasured collection items were of particular significance as MacGillivray was struggling with his own demons and with his companions. The entry continues:

> It helps wonderfully to keep up my spirits, which are sometimes much depressed but only for a short time. Every white man on board against me except the Capt. and, perhaps, the cook. But sometimes when I think of it the ludicrous side shows itself and I enjoy a quiet but hearty inward laugh, as I shall be in the right at the end, and my conscience approves of what I have done, and I am confident that Capt. Paddon will not find fault with me.[106]

When the carpenter finally finished his work the *Julia Percy* commenced its journey back to the Lizard Island base. It was to be a long and tedious voyage, at one point taking five and a half days to achieve a distance of 53 miles. 'Miserable work this', MacGillivray recorded in his journal.[107] Along the way tortoiseshell trading continued whenever the opportunity arose. The largest amount was obtained at Cape Grenville – approximately 40 lbs. The crew of the *Julia Percy* had advised the 'natives' that they would return in 'two moons' to purchase any tortoise shell that they could obtain. MacGillivray commented that:

> It is curious to observe the difference in the mode of trading between the natives here and those of the Torres Strait. Here each native hands up his heap of shell in a lump and patiently waits - saying nothing - for payment, taking whatever he is offered. Whereas a Torres Strait nigger would chatter away for a quarter of an hour with the same quantity of shell - handing it up piece by piece, and talking, asking and begging, all the while.[108]

The *Julia Percy* arrived at Lizard Island on 10 February. The news was not good. Six further deaths had occurred during their absence. A heavy gale in early January had caused damage and flooding. The garden had been submerged and one of the cases of specimens left by MacGillivray had gone mouldy. Nothing had been heard from Paddon and neither the *Spec* nor the *Black Dog* had made an appearance. It was yet another litany of disasters for the Torres Strait Expedition.

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[105] MacGillivray, *Journal III,* 7 January 1861.

[106] *Ibid*

[107] *Ibid,* 21 January 1861.

[108] *Ibid,* 23 January 1861. In 'Wanderings in tropical Australia No.X.', *Sydney Morning Herald,* 27 March 1862, 4. MacGillivray used this passage almost verbatim but changes the word 'nigger' to 'man'.

MacGillivray spent the next week packing and preparing the specimens collected on the last cruise. He strolled along the beaches and collected some butterflies and plants and pondered his next move. There was some talk, not seriously thought of according to MacGillivray, of cutting their losses, packing up the station and returning to Port de France. Eventually it was decided that the *Julia Percy* would leave to pursue beche-de-mer in the neighbourhood and await further news of Paddon or the arrival of one of his vessels. MacGillivray simply could not face the thought of going back on board the brig. He spoke to Banner and it was agreed that he would remain on Lizard Island until the *Julia Percy* returned or until Paddon arrived. MacGillivray wrote that this had been his 'long cherished' desire and that he:

> ...had even offered to remain alone on Lizard Island after his departure, provided he left me provisions, so confident was I that Capt. Paddon would be down soon.[109]

The foreman on the island base, Bowman, arranged to have some of the beche-de-mer workers construct MacGillivray a small house set apart from all the other dwellings. In a rare moment of exuberance MacGillivray ends this journal with a large, swirling 'finis' signalling his intense relief to be at the end of this gruelling, unpleasant and stressful journey. If MacGillivray could have foreseen the trials he was to undergo in the following months his exuberance at being on shore would have been short lived.

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[109] *Ibid*, 18 February 1861.

Chapter 9

A home on Lizard Island
February – October 1861

Time spent on board a man-of-war in confined quarters is one thing; time spent on board a small brig with a rough and unhappy crew and their women was, for MacGillivray, obviously something far worse. The relief of being off the *Julia Percy* is clearly evident in his journal. His most fervent wish was not to see the brig or its inhabitants for at least two months. This wish was to be granted but the outcome would prove to be a bitter one for the naturalist. The period of his residence on Lizard Island was to be of far greater duration than he had ever anticipated. Eight long months would elapse before he would finally depart. One of the five journals now in the collection of the Australian National Maritime Museum is dedicated to this time on Lizard Island. It is perhaps the most revealing and personal of all MacGillivray's writings. It documents his initial optimism and activity, then his gradual decline into despondency, hopelessness and despair. It provides as yet unseen glimpses into MacGillivray's character and personality and contains a startling revelation. The journal also provides a glimpse into the difficulties of a travelling collector as MacGillivray describes some of the more intricate details of his work. This journal is the only source for the period, which makes its discovery highly significant. In his published account of the Torres Strait Expedition MacGillivray effectively skips these eight months stating simply that he was resident on the island. This journal therefore, and the story of MacGillivray's Lizard Island residency has never before been documented.

MacGillivray's residence on Lizard Island began well. While his accommodation was basic it was, he wrote, far better than his situation on board the *Julia Percy* '...sleeping on deck near three black strumpets lying about like pigs alongside of their keepers.'[1] Four days after his arrival he moved into his small hut. It measured 11 feet by 8 and was 8 feet 10 inches high in the centre. The sides and roof were thatched with grass and the floor was sand. His bed was constructed out of the staves of a flour barrel and his furniture was made complete with the addition of a table and a lamp. Once installed MacGillivray felt like a changed man and hoped to be of as little trouble to everyone as possible. To his delight for the first time in many months he felt able to sleep without his trousers. He organised for Joe, 'the chinaman', to look after his cooking and washing for a fee of 10 shillings a week. With his physical comforts settled he set about making the most of what Lizard Island could offer.

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[1] John MacGillivray, *Journal IV. February 19 1861 to October 16 1861 'Torres Strait Expedition" (Stay at Lizard Island)*, 19 February 1861, Australian National Maritime Museum, Sydney.

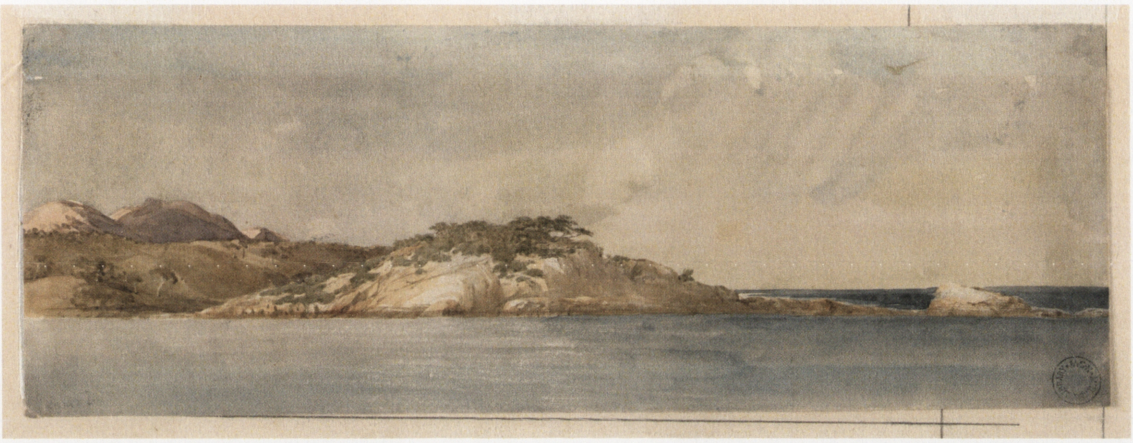

Plate 25: Lizard Island
(Oswald Brierly, watercolour, in 'Sketches on board the HMS Rattlesnake'. Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales)

The months of February and March passed quickly. MacGillivray's journal is full of his collecting activities. Plants, frogs, bats, birds, shells, snakes, eggs and all kinds of insects were caught each day as he traversed the island in search of specimens. The days when he remained about his house were spent cleaning shells, shifting drying plants and constructing and lining boxes ready to transport his various collections. A porpoise's head was submerged in a nearby well. This valuable specimen was steadily cleaned and prepared. He ventured forth each day into the scrub with his rake to shift leaves and debris uncovering land shells, beetles and occasionally, to his occasional alarm, snakes. With his insect net he captured butterflies – on one occasion a specimen 7½ inches wide. His health remained good, his collecting productive and his spirits relatively high.

It was not until April that a hint of discontent emerges in his journal. By 4 April his journal notes 'Forget how I was employed on this day but presume I collected something'. He began to lie and look at the stars at night. He even admitted being forced, through boredom, to read a novel – *Gulliver's Travels*. By 7 April, despite securing a fine Mantis for the collection, his frustration was evident.

> Don't remember what I did or what I did not do today so conclude nothing very wonderful can have happened. The weather consequently is the only thing I can note. There was no hurricane today, nor did either an earthquake or an eclipse happen here.[2]

April was also marked by a series of deaths of the Pacific Island labourers. A number had already perished during the *Julia Percy's* last cruise and the number was set to rise. Between 8 April and 23 April, a period of just two weeks, 7 men died – 2 from Tana, 4 from Lifu and one from Mare. The last to die marked the twentieth death on the Island since the first arrival of the *Julia Percy*. Bowman, the foreman at the station, requested MacGillivray perform an autopsy on one of the Lifu men to attempt to ascertain his cause of death. MacGillivray found an enormous quantity of blood and serum in the chest cavity but found nothing else that would account for his sudden death.[3]

On 21 April MacGillivray made what was to be the first of many excursions to the top of the nearest hill where he sat, looked and hoped to see an approaching vessel but he saw nothing on the horizon. Collecting began to slow as the weather started to cool. MacGillivray looked for other pursuits to while away the long days. He began working on a lexicon of the Lifu language in order to 'pass the time in a rational manner'.[4] Insects, he noted, were now scarce and he felt that he would not be able to complete another full box before the time would come to send off his specimens. At the beginning of April he set about dividing his plants into 12 sets. With this accomplished he worked on a butterfly box, which he filled with over 700 specimens. Of these he noted there were only 63 species represented. In May he began sorting his dried ferns, of which he had collected 11 species.

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[2] *Ibid*, 7 April 1861.

[3] MacGillivray was often called upon to undertake medical duties. He notes that this is troublesome as he never has the correct medication and finds the people a bother.

MacGillivray's journal provides insights into the difficulties of a collector working in the tropics with limited resources. He was forced on numerous occasions to experiment with different preserving techniques and treatments for various forms of infestation. On one occasion he noted that:

> ...smearing with coal tar the strings by which I hang up my insect boxes prevents the small red ants from getting at them, but I have already sustained many serious losses from these tiny plagues.[5]

In another attempt to rid a case of red ants he fumigated the box with arsenic. Finding materials from which to construct cases for his specimens also presented a challenge. On one occasion a box was constructed from planks and on another from an empty gin case. Hopefully, given MacGillivray's reputation, the former content of the box was not evident to the purchasers.

May and June 1860 were to be some of the most difficult months of MacGillivray's often difficult life. The days stretched by with no vessel sighted, no collecting opportunities, no company, no stimulation and little to record apart from the weather. On 30 May he recorded in his journal that a small native dog passed by his door. He shot at it with his gun but it took no notice. When he shouted it quickened its pace slightly. On 1 June he wrote:

> ...a miserable state of things this when on writing up a week's journal I find there is nothing to record except the state of the weather and the remarkably commonplace event of a small dog having passed my door.[6]

Things were certainly about to become more interesting for MacGillivray but not necessarily happier. The *Julia Percy* returned to Lizard Island on 4 June having completed what the crew considered a successful beche-de-mer operation in the Horwich Isles.

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[4] MacGillivray, *Journal IV*, 22 April 1861.

[5] *Ibid*, 4 April 1861.

[6] *Ibid*, 1 June 1861.

Resentment lingered regarding the success, or otherwise, of the 'northern cruise' in which MacGillivray had taken such an active part and the later beche-de-mer operations centred at the Horwich Isles. MacGillivray amused himself 'when there is no great variety of subjects from which to draw amusement' regarding the relative success of the two last voyages of the *Julia Percy*. He compared this last trip, 'from which such wonders were to be expected, and the much abused former one of running after specimens with "that naturalist"'.[7]

He estimated that the voyage from November to February through the Torres Strait during which he reckoned that 365 lbs of shell had been obtained, had earned the *Julia Percy* a total of £219 or 46 shillings per day. On the latter cruise of fifteen weeks from February to June approximately 435 tons of beche-de-mer was obtained. This had earned only a total of £178 or 34 shillings per day. Resentment aside, there were benefits in having the *Julia Percy* based back at Lizard Island. Banner gave MacGillivray some shark oil so that for the first time in months he was able to read at night – however he recorded bitterly that there was nothing to read and nothing worth writing about.

On 10 June the *Berengaria* arrived. Captain Royall was on his way to Hong Kong and was to deliver supplies to Lizard Island and take the beche-de-mer on to the Asian markets. Captain Royall also delivered a stunning blow - the news that Captain Paddon had died at Port de France in February. This information threw all plans for the future of the station and the *Julia Percy* into a state of confusion. MacGillivray gratefully took delivery of a bundle of Australian newspapers, which he sat up most of the night reading. The following day he began preparing his specimens for dispatch while he considered the news and its implications for his own future. He finished various letters that would be taken on board the *Berengaria*. He wrote a long letter to Rev. Geddie,[8] and others to Captain Edwards, Messrs Russel and Co of Hong Kong and Mr Gibbs in London. To Mr Gibbs he addressed four cases of specimens and instructed him to accept an offer of £160 should it be forthcoming rather than waiting for the result of sale by commission. The specimens and letters were delivered to the mate on board the *Berengaria* on 12 June.

A new and dangerous atmosphere had emerged with the news of Paddon's death. The uncertainty caused by this change in circumstance permeated throughout the station.

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[7] *Ibid*, no date.

[8] This is presumably the letter held in the Presbyterian Foreign Mission Correspondence a copy of which was supplied by G.S. Parsonson. In his journal MacGillivray called it 'the longest work of my life', *Journal IV*, no date.

Although not openly stated, MacGillivray had lost his major protector and friend from this period and the feeling that he was even more isolated and exposed is evident in his journal entries of the following months. After delivering his specimens to the *Berengaria* trouble began. MacGillivray wrote:

> I find the following entry in my notebook. 5PM "Thankful I have just seen my 4 cases of specimens put in the boat and delivered my letters to the mate to be given to the Captain. So one part of the drama is over. What the next will be I know not – perhaps something of consequence. This very night, for I have been packing up my own things as it is by no means improbable that I may have to go on to China yet". I can trust no one – among other atrocious deeds committed to day was the compelling Brewer or long Jack to go on in the barque under threat of losing his money – the object of concern being that he should leave his wife behind for that boy Bowman who has been smelling and sniffing at her tail for months back. Of course no sooner was Jack in the boat "for good" than the infamous woman removed her box into the store and took up her abode there. But I shall not pollute my pen by committing to paper all that took place today, suffice it that I have become inflamed with a deadly feeling of revenge – a determination to see due punishment meted out to the actors in this Torres Strait Plot – an infamous transaction from beginning to end – But I shall say no more about it here.[9]

MacGillivray could barely contain his disgust and outrage and was obviously fearful for his own future. When the *Berengeria* sailed on the following day he wrote that it was only once she had gone that he felt safe.[10]

With the departure of the *Berengaria* and the death of Paddon MacGillivray felt that there was no longer any need for him to keep a daily journal. The island, he stated, was exhausted. There was nothing left for him to collect and nothing for him to do except to wait for a vessel that might take him off the island. Little did he realise that he would have another four months before he would depart. His entries for July are made on a weekly basis. He set about writing up the proceedings of the Torres Strait Cruise for publication in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in order to pass the time and in the hope of receiving a few pounds income.

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[9] *Ibid,* 12 June 1861. MacGillivray added: 'Brewer was induced to go by the offer of payment as soon as the vessel was under way – the money being counted out and placed in Capt Royall's hands – of a considerable sum of money which Capt. Paddon had owed him, and which he believed his death had forever debarred him from receiving unless he accepted the present offer. He made ineffectual attempts to get a passage for his wife offering to pay £20 but was refused, for this would have defeated the whole scheme, which was to force him to leave the woman in order that the storekeeper should get her which he did within an hour of the boat shoving off with her husband, while the successful schemer on the following day voluntarily admitted to me that he had been long ago instructed in Eromanga by Capt. Paddon to pay the money, but had withheld this piece of information.'

[10] *Ibid,* 13 June 1861.

Uncertainty and unrest continued. One evening after dark Captain Banner and Miller, one of his crew, arrived on MacGillivray's doorstep drunk and announced that they intended to make an immediate start for Rockhampton. They invited MacGillivray to join them. He refused and stated that he required 24 hours notice before departing, upon which Banner stated that they would not wait. He took from MacGillivray the charts and *Directory* and stormed from the hut. The following morning calm had been restored and the charts and *Directory* were returned.

Beche-de-mer collecting continued with the boats based at Eagle Island. Deaths continued at a steady pace across the island. On 14 June MacGillivray recorded the death of a man from Tana making the 7th death out of the 12 Tana men brought by the *Julia Percy* and the 23rd death on the island since their arrival. MacGillivray had earlier commented that many of the deaths on the island were more likely to be cases for a coroner than a doctor but by this stage he felt that despair was the greatest killer upon the island. He wrote of another sick man from Tana to whom he took food, tobacco and bread when he was able. This man, he wrote:

> ...will probably die soon and yet I suppose there is nothing the matter with him except despondency, perhaps despair at the seeming impossibility of his ever getting back to his own country. They who have been the cause of this have much to answer for.[11]

On 28 June MacGillivray recorded that his 'Chinaman' had gone across to Eagle Island and he was now forced to fend for himself. His gun, previously used as one of his principle tools of trade now became a tool of survival, the creatures killed as often as not destined for the pot rather than the packing cases.

In August the yellow *cochlospermum* now came into flower marking a new season and a year since the first arrival of the *Julia Percy*. This *cochlospermum* had been a highlight of his plant collecting on his visit to Lizard Island in 1848.[12] Did MacGillivray realise that in the *Flora Australiensis* published in London in 1863, George Bentham would name the species *Cochlospermum gillivraei* in his honour?[13] Perhaps it would have helped to make the tedious months more bearable. Certainly the change in season helped. More insects were about and

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[11] *Ibid*, 21 July 1861.

[12] John MacGillivray, *Narrative of the Voyage of H.M.S. Rattlesnake, Commanded by the late Captain Owen Stanley, R.N., F.R.S. During the years 1846-1850. Including Discoveries and Surveys in New Guinea, The Louisiade Archipelago.* (London: T&W Boone, 1852), Vol. 1, 108.

[13] Boland, Douglas, Ian Brooker, M. W. McDonald, CSIRO Publishing and Ensis, *Forest Trees of Australia.* 5th ed. (Melbourne: CSIRO Publishing : Ensis, 2006), 88.

MacGillivray ventured once more into the scrub and onto the beaches in search of distraction.

It was during these lonely and desperate months that MacGillivray recorded a touching and rare moment of personal revelation. MacGillivray, it seems, was in love. After six long and difficult months on the island he was having difficulty sleeping. Morphia was the only way in which he could ensure a satisfactory rest. When morphia was not of assistance he would spend his long nights thinking of something far more pleasant than his enforced residence on this lonely island. He thought instead of a young and beautiful girl – a girl who had found a place in his heart when he arrived in Aneityum in 1858. MacGillivray wrote:

> …when lying awake I have got into the habit of indulging largely in all sorts of improbable and almost impossible imaginary speculations regarding the future in which the "Gem of the Coral Seas" takes a prominent part. May God bless the dear little creature – all unconsciously she has been the source of much innocent enjoyment to me, and, it is not too much to say, of much good – I wonder if I shall ever see her again and tell her of it, as I think I would do, especially if married which she probably is by this time. At any rate no one more sincerely wishes her every happiness than I do – hardly even excepting her parents, of whom I never know a couple saving my father and mother whom I like half as well[14]

This insomnious reflection is followed by a statement that sets the biographer's heart racing, producing, as it does, a moment of that tenuous connection between biographer and subject that is as powerful as any 'footstepping' of the physical variety. MacGillivray wrote:

> Dear me! This is singular matter to introduce into my journal. It will puzzle any strangers who may happen to read it – who will the first stranger be?[15]

Although he never records her name there can be little doubt that his fantasies revolved around the young Charlotte Geddie, the Reverend Geddie's eldest daughter - the young woman who had presented him with a stick insect, which he (perhaps tenderly) named in her honour.[16] Born in 1840 Charlotte had attended boarding school in London before returning to the island of Aneityum on 5 June 1857. MacGillivray obviously treasured his encounters with this young woman – the memories of which were to sustain him in the difficult months ahead.

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[14] MacGillivray, *Journal IV,* 4 August 1861.

[15] *Ibid*

[16] MacGillivray was incorrect in assuming that Charlotte had, by this stage, married. Charlotte had left Anietyum in 1859 to accompany two of her younger siblings back to continue their schooling. Charlotte married her cousin, William Harris Harrington in Pictou, Nova Scotia in 1865. They had three daughters and a son. She died in 1906. *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?BioId=40855&query= (accessed 25 October 2010).

It is worth pausing at this point to consider MacGillivray's expression of his feelings for Charlotte Geddie and what this touching confession tells us about his ideas and opinions of the women he encountered throughout his life and career.

As a rule women do not feature within MacGillivray's writings. His journals and letters are reserved for his business, and women, apart from their place as subjects of ethnographic observation, do not play a part in his work. That his thoughts are recorded for his 'Gem' within his Lizard Island journal is an indication of his unusual state of mind during his confinement on the island.

Although rarely mentioned, it is valuable to examine the fortunes of some of the women whose lives intersected with that of MacGillivray. This process offers an insight into some of the opportunities and modes of living that were open to different classes of women, as they moved between Australia and Britain and along the fringes of Empire. As well as providing a glimpse into their lives and experiences, an examination of the way in which he perceived women offers an interesting perspective on the way in which women were viewed, used and regarded by men such as MacGillivray. Given the relative scarcity of sources regarding the lives of women, accounts such as MacGillivray's must be mined for the information they contain and, when read alongside other sources, can provide some material for scholars studying the place of women in the environments in which MacGillivray was living and working.

The women in MacGillivray's life can perhaps best be classified as those he would have claimed to love, those he was related to, the women he studied and the women he scorned. An examination of the women in MacGillivray's life immediately highlights the diversity of experience of women across the British Empire. The women encountered within MacGillivray's story range across a number of geographic locations, races and socio-economic backgrounds. Each woman's story is illustrative of particular facets of imperial or contact history – many of them highlight the more tragic aspects of these histories. What is perhaps most interesting is to examine the way in which the different types of women encountered by MacGillivray have been treated, or have failed to be treated, within the historical record.

Of all the women in MacGillivray's life Williamina Paton Gray was perhaps the most important and the one MacGillivray's writings tell us least about. Marriage to MacGillivray would lead to disaster for the young Sydney resident – a life of poverty, despair and loneliness. Death at around 31 years of age, leaving behind her three young children she had been struggling to support alone, Williamina's story illustrates the trauma and difficulties of return migration. In her few short years Williamina made the journey between Scotland and England twice and between England and New South Wales on three occasions. In and of itself this was not particularly uncommon – although less common for a woman – giving the lie, even as early as this in the life of the new colony, to the notion that Britain and Australia were separated by a tyranny of distance. Stories of return migration have tended to concentrate on success, with emigrants returning to their home to show off their new-found wealth or status.[17] Williamina's story was quite different. In leaving Australia and moving to England she left behind family, security and support. Having left Scotland as a small girl to settle in New South Wales, her trip to England became her own frontier story. Britain was, for her, a place full of hostile 'natives' and new landscapes. She was reliant on a husband weighed down by problems with debt and drinking and whose occupation necessitated his absence from England for long periods. When MacGillivray effectively deserted Williamina, leaving her in penury in a foreign land with children to fend for and debts to repay, he committed what has been seen as perhaps his greatest sin by those that have written about him.[18] It is telling that in his obituary of MacGillivray his brother-in-law P.C. Beaton makes no mention of his every having had a wife or children. Williamina has left no trace in the official records. No letters or diaries exist. Her voice and experience have been lost.[19]

It is difficult to speculate on the attraction between MacGillivray and Williamina; his revelations about his 'Gem' are perhaps easier to read and to locate within the historiography of the period. Charlotte Geddie would have represented to MacGillivray an ideal of femininity that was hard to resist. Women's roles were a contested issue within Victorian values. Writings regarding women's spheres of influence from the period struggle with the concepts of women's public and private roles, their roles in relationship to men, their perceived moral superiority and their subordinate status.[20] Within the framework of white women's roles in the nineteenth century, missionary women can be seen as one model of ideal Christian femininity.[21] Missionary wives and daughters were able, through example, to demonstrate to those they attempted to convert that 'civilization' would flow through the establishment of domesticity and clear separate spheres for females.[22] These women were also able, through their role as colonial or frontier women, to forge a different kind of respectability and gentility – one that Kathryn Gleadle identifies as including 'characteristics such as strength, bravery and adaptability'.[23] This personification of young Christian frontier womanhood would have appealed to MacGillivray after his wanderings in remote locations. Charlotte's obvious interest in MacGillivray's occupation (as evidenced by her presentation to him of the stick insect) would also have appealed. It was quite acceptable for young ladies to have an interest in natural history by this stage – although botany was still the most acceptable branch of collecting for females.[24] Stories such as Charlotte's have received considerable attention and analysis by historians. The role of women in this area, their experiences, modes of behaviour and roles within the framework of contact and empire have therefore been well documented.[25]

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[17] Eric Richards, 'British Diaspora' in Carol R. Ember, Melvin Ember and Ian Skoggard (eds), *Encyclopedia of diasporas: immigrant and refugee cultures around the world* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004), 52.

[18] As recently as 2009 in Clemency Fisher and John Calaby, 'The Top of the Top End: John Gilbert's Manuscript Notes for John Gould on Vertebrates from Port Essington and Cobourg Peninsula (Northern Territory, Australia); with Comments on Specimens Collected during the Settlement Period 1838 to 1849, and Subsequently', *The Beagle, Records of the Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory*, Supplement 4 (December 2009): 12. In which MacGillivray's life post 1855 was summed up as 'MacGillivray deserted his tubercular wife and his children, and died of alcoholism in a hotel in Sydney.

[19] The same is not true of MacGillivray's sisters. Although he offers no comment or personal insight regarding his sisters' lives and choices, governesses, like them, have left numerous traces which have enabled numerous historians to examine their particular colonial story. For example see, Patricia Clarke, *The governesses : letters from the colonies 1862-1882* (Melbourne: Hutchison, 1985). James Hammerton, *Emigrant Gentlewomen: Genteel Poverty and Female Emigration 1830-1914* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1979), 127. Rita S. Kranidis, *The Victorian spinster and colonial emigration: contested subjects* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).

Less well documented have been the lives of the women who missionaries such as the Geddies were attempting to 'civilise'. MacGillivray's ethnographic writings regarding the women he encountered consistently conform to the prevailing view held by Victorians that

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[20] Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), 149.

[21] Alison Twells, *The Civilising Mission and the English Middle Class, 1792-1850: The 'Heathen' at Home and Overseas*, (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 9. Se also Bronwen Douglas, 'Provocative readings in intransigent archives: Finding Aneityumese women', *Oceania* 70 (1999): 7.

[22] For a discussion of the debates surrounding the 'separate spheres' view of women's history see Kathryn Gleadle, *British Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001), 2. Also, Twells, *The Civilising Mission and the English Middle Class*, 9.

[23] Gleadle, *British Women in the Nineteenth Century*, 56.

[24] David Elliston Allen, *The Naturalist in Britain: A social history*, (Princeton, Chichester: Princeton University Press: 1976), 42. Allen notes that as early as 1766 a volume was issued 'The Young Ladies Introduction to Natural History'. Interestingly entomology was an area in which ladies participation was particularly questioned because of the perceived cruelty involved in pinning the specimens. It may be that Charlotte presented MacGillivray with the living specimen which he then prepared. In his writings on the subject William MacGillivray had stated 'Ladies indeed cannot become practical ornithologists, although they make no scruple in spitting insects…' For an examination of this see Ann Larsen Hollerbach, 'Of Sangfroid and Sphinx Moths: Cruelty, Public Relations, and the Growth of Entomology in England, 1800-1840', *Osiris* 2nd Series, 11 (1996): 208.

[25] For example see Clare Midgley, *Feminism and Empire: Women Activists in Imperial Britain*, 1790-1865 (London; New York: Routledge: 2007), in particular Section 4: 'Can women be missionaries? Imperial philanthropy, female agency and feminism', 92-123. Alison Twells, *The Civilising Mission.* Also J.H. Proctor, 'Scottish missionaries and the governance of the New Hebrides', *Journal of Church and State*, March (1999): 1-14.

'native' women were treated poorly by their societies. They were often described as beasts of burden or as slaves. Both terms are used by MacGillivray at various points. A key part of the civilising mission was to liberate these women from such primitive existences.[26] Ethnographic writings such as MacGillivray's and the writings of missionaries have provided a rich source of information for historians of the period interested in the lives and experiences of non-white women. Much of this work has been conducted from within the disciplines of anthropology and archaeology rather than history specifically.[27]

MacGillivray's writings on non-white women from the latter period of his career are particularly interesting. His writings while on board HMS *Fly*, *Rattlesnake* and *Herald* conform strongly to the prevailing attitudes as already outlined. However his attitude towards the women he encountered once the careful distance enforced, or enabled, by his association with the Royal Navy broke down, quickly changes tone and loses the studied objectivity and gentleness evident in his earlier work. As Patty O'Brien notes in *The Pacific Muse*, men's 'interactions with Pacific women and the ways they represented them were shaped by their social position, their education, and their moral persuasion'.[28] MacGillivray's fluid social position clearly demonstrates this shifting nature of representation and interaction. Despite his recognition of the brutality of the men toward 'their' women as demonstrated in the first of his Wanderings series he quickly labels the women on board the *Julia Percy* as 'sluts' and 'whores'. His attitudes and opinions are clearly shaped by the people with whom he shared his life and his mode of operation. There is ample scope for further work to be conducted using MacGillivray's observations regarding non-white women as a basis, however this falls outside the scope of this particular work.

The combined effects of dreams of 'his gem', morphia and renewed opportunities for collecting helped to make August and September more bearable. On 4 August he shot four *Nectarinia australis* (Australian Sun-birds) and managed to skin two of them. During the month butterflies became more plentiful, some shells reappeared on the beach and he managed to construct a new insect box out of a tea chest.

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[26] Mona Etienne and Eleanor Leacock (eds), *Women and Colonization: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Praeger, 1980), 1.

[27] In particular the valuable work conducted by Bronwen Douglas, see, 'Provocative readings in intransigent archives', 111-29, also Margaret Jolly, ''To Save the Girls for Brighter and Better Lives' Presbyterian Missions and Women in the South of Vanuatu: 1848-1870', *The Journal of Pacific History*, 26, 1 (June 1991): 27-48. Also see Matthew Spriggs, 'A school in every district: the cultural geography of conversion on Aneityum southern Vanuatu', *Journal of Pacific History*, 20, 1 (1985): 23-41.

[28] Patty O'Brien, *The Pacific Muse: Exotic Femininity and the Colonial Pacific* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2006), 11.

Obtaining enough to eat however, remained his primary concern. Fish were a welcome addition to his meals and any birds shot were made into a soup with rice. His journal recorded:

> A great event happened today. I got a small leg of pork. A very small one – yet big enough to be chronicled in these hard times along with beetles, and other wonders of the animal creation.[29]

On 2 September a ray of hope appeared. Banner informed MacGillivray that the *Julia Percy* would set sail for Sydney with the full moon. This news, along with a supper of Torres Strait Pigeon soup and dreams of his 'ocean gem' combined '…to bring me into such a state of good humour as almost to be contented with my lot'.[30]

MacGillivray's contentment would not last. There was still over a month of his island confinement remaining. Thanks to the warming of the season his collecting resumed in a slow manner. Many days he recorded as 'blank' occasionally followed by 'an even blanker one'.[31] In some ways, he mused, his life imitated a fashionable one in that after a sleepless night thinking of his gem he would get up, wash, have a pipe, eat and then return to bed, making day night and night day.[32]

By the beginning of October it appeared that prospects were brightening. MacGillivray began to collect specimens specifically intended to appeal to the Sydney market, especially the Australian Museum, as his thoughts shifted towards his return to the city. Twice MacGillivray notes collections of shells that he has prepared for 'Angas'. It is almost certain that Angas refers to George French Angas, the artist and naturalist. In 1853 Angas had been appointed to the position of Secretary at the Australian Museum.[33] Several mentions are also made in MacGillivray's journal of items that he would sell once he returned to Sydney. A detailed listing of a case of insects packed for sale includes 271 specimens (of 83 species) which he calculates might fetch him £3 .7 .9.[34] A detailed examination of the contents of this single case provides a picture of the collecting that MacGillivray records so diligently in his journal each day. It contained:

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[29] MacGillivray, *Journal IV*, 13 August 1861.
[30] *Ibid*, 2 September 1861.
[31] *Ibid*, 8 September 1861.
[32] *Ibid*, 13 September 1861.
[33] Tom Iredale, 'George French Angas: The Father of Australian Conchology', *Australian Zoologist*, XII, (1959): 363. One of the best documented incidents of Angas's term in office was his dispute with the Curator of the Museum William Sheridan Wall. This had escalated in October 1858 when Wall's dog defecated on the steps to the Museum. An incensed Angas had told him to clear out of the building. MacGillivray may not have been aware that Angas retired from the Museum in 1860.
[34] MacGillivray, *Journal IV*, undated entry.

- 159 specimens of 34 species of Coleoptera (beetles)
- 57 specimens of 19 species of Hymenoptera (sawflies, wasps, bees, ants)
- 5 specimens of 3 species of Orthoptera (grasshoppers, crickets, katydids)
- 4 specimens of 3 species of Hemiptera (cicadas, aphids, planthoppers)
- 2 specimens of 2 species of Neuroptera (net-winged insects – lacewings, antlions)
- 6 specimens of 3 species of Diptera (flies, mosquitoes)
- and 38 specimens of 19 species of Lepidoptera (moths and butterflies)

MacGillivray also prepared a case of shells that he hoped to send back to his old friends on Aneityum.

It is significant to note that MacGillivray's collecting did not actively include cultivating relationships with the Australian Aboriginal people who periodically visited Lizard Island.[35] MacGillivray's lack of interaction is in stark contrast to his ethnographic interests while on board the *Fly*, *Rattlesnake*, *Herald* and even the *Julia Percy*. His interactions with visiting locals were extremely limited. On 1 March a group of 10 Aboriginal men appeared on the ridge above the settlement. They had some turtle, fish and some shell for which they were given biscuit. MacGillivray approached them but they were wary on account, he felt, of his being a stranger. He persuaded them to give him around 14 words such as *Yenegar*, for the settlement bay, *Kangar* for woman, *Kangall* for child, *Yoko* for Dugong, *Wallar* for beard.[36] These words, he noted, were at times identical to those used around Endeavour River. However this was the extent of the relationship.

Visits by the Australians were infrequent and as often as not the dogs were set on them in order to discourage further visits. Petty thefts occurred for which the Aboriginal people were blamed. On 6 June a group of 7 or 8 'natives' came into the settlement's garden and broke up some of the fences. They destroyed some watermelons before being chased off the island. They were followed to a nearby island where 21 'natives' and 4 canoes were found. The 'natives' retreated to the highest point of the island while the beche-de-mer men broke up the nearest of the canoes in an act of retribution. Just prior to the departure of the *Julia Percy* the most significant confrontation between the beche-de-mer mob and the Australian Aboriginal people occurred. On 9 October MacGillivray arose to find that his rake, butterfly net and some clothes were missing. A group of around 30 Aboriginal men appeared on the ridge. MacGillivray and Cawley approached with loaded guns and the group retreated. They stayed in position overnight and MacGillivray prepared for a confrontation but nothing further was seen of them.

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[35] The traditional owners of Lizard Island are the Dingaal.

[36] MacGillivray, *Journal IV*, 1 March 1861.

This shift in MacGillivray's attitude towards the local populations is a significant one. Although he makes a cursory effort to establish some form of linguistic investigation he appears more interested in continuing his Lifu vocabulary rather than establishing a dialogue with any visitors to the island. MacGillivray's attitude has become that of a resident protecting his area, his belongings, his home. Local visitors are seen as a nuisance, as a threat. This is a different form of frontier encounter for MacGillivray – a new role for him to take on.

The *Julia Percy* was brought up for badly needed repairs and cleaning. On 7 October supplies began to be loaded onto the brig in preparation for departure. On 8 October MacGillivray wrote:

> Loading brig continuing – inspiring fresh hope – how I am longing to get away towards civilisation and the world, and then how slowly the weary days and nights will pass away as we creep bit by bit to the southward – or until I reach Sydney – the goal of all my present hopes, but which it is not very unlikely may be to me the same word with a different meaning! Quiem sabe?[37]

Finally, on 15 October everything was packed and ready to depart. The station was completely broken up, the old boats sunk and the crew on board. There was however one last drama to unfold. One of the white traders, Robert Simpson had died on 3 September leaving 'his' Isle of Pines woman without a protector. MacGillivray wrote that she:

> ...was coveted by a wretched contemptible looking object of a man belonging to the brig – who has a wife in Sydney. She refused – as she had done before – to live with him, and when he took her things on board she went away into the bush. However she was persuaded to come back and resign herself to her hard fate but she selected old Jack Dill in preference to the other suitor who had taken the clothes, and as this venerable individual who had also made advances to her, else death by starvation would probably been her lot had she had she lived until fallen in with by the Australians. I do not know what part if any the Captain took in these nefarious proceedings, but this I do know that he could have prevented it and protected the poor helpless woman from future violence.[38]

With this last unpleasantness settled the brig was ready to depart. MacGillivray settled into his old quarters on board the brig and for the first time in many months had a supper that left him feeling replete. His confinement was at and end. One last short journey aboard the *Julia Percy* remained before he could once again attempt to establish himself in Australia.

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[37] *Ibid*, 8 October 1861. Quiem sabe? Who knows?

[38] *Ibid*, 15 October 1861.

> *"Last scene of all*
> *That ends this strange eventful history."*

The quotation was written in MacGillivray's hand on the cover of the fifth and last journal detailing the "Torres Strait Expedition". After eight months of isolation and hopelessness even the despised *Julia Percy* felt, to MacGillivray, like a haven. He wrote:

> How merely comparative an entity is luxury! So I thought last night when I turned into my old bunk and felt as if I had a bed under me...[39]

MacGillivray's relief soon turned to dismay as day after day passed and the *Julia Percy* did not leave the island. MacGillivray stayed on board the vessel while they waited for favourable winds, perhaps fearing that if he stepped ashore he would be left behind. It was not until 30 October - a full fourteen days after he boarded the brig - that he finally awoke to find that the *Julia Percy* was under way.

On leaving Lizard Island MacGillivray considered the cost of the voyage:

> We now mustered forty-five in all, twenty-five of our number having been buried on Lizard Island, viz, two white men, five Chinese, six natives of Lifu and one of Mare (French subjects), eight of Tanna, and one of Eramanga, also two women. Such was the fearful price paid for our beche-de-mer and tortoise-shell; but human misery and blood are not *money*, and mammon does not enter them in the Dr. and Cr. Accounts kept in this world, however prominently they may figure in the balance to be struck in the next.[40]

If the trip was less than rewarding for MacGillivray it could only be considered disastrous for the rest of the crew. Many of the crew would have had very little idea of what the voyage would entail or how long their absence from home and family would be. The death of Paddon had thrown all arrangements into doubt and little could be hoped for in the way of financial returns for any on board.

The voyage from Lizard Island was tedious, slow and uneventful. Apart from fishing there was little amusement to break the monotony. MacGillivray made frequent complaints about the quality of navigation and felt that their progress would have been far faster had this been done competently. As it was, the *Julia Percy* inched its way down the coast and on many days made no progress at all. MacGillivray recorded only one or two opportunities for collecting. He had run out of shot and made his own supplies with powder begged from shipmates and borrowed lead for slugs. A few beetles, snails and a couple of brush turkeys was all that he collected. MacGillivray's sights were firmly set on the end of the voyage rather than the collecting opportunities that it presented.

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[39] John MacGillivray, *Journal V. 16 October 1861 to - "Torres Strait Expedition" (The Return)*, Australian National Maritime Museum, Sydney, 16 October 1861, (The closing date in the title is missing).

[40] John MacGillivray, 'Wanderings in tropical Australia No.XI', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 April 1862, 4.

Finally on 7 December – after a voyage of 38 days the *Julia Percy* anchored in Keppel Bay. Banner departed on the following day for Rockhampton in one of the whaleboats in order to consult with Robert Towns' agent regarding the future of the *Julia Percy*. MacGillivray left the ship five days later and boarded the steamer *Eagle* bound for Sydney.[41]

When MacGillivray boarded the *Eagle* he noted abruptly that he would now conclude his journal. The *Wanderings* series concludes with this, more revealing, comment:

> … I leave her without a shadow of regret except for those poor islanders who have now been eighteen months absent from their homes to which some of them (I allude to those who came voluntarily) were to have been taken back in "two moons!"[42]

For all his stated intention of using his articles as a way of informing the Sydney population about the possibilities for and potential of trade in the Pacific islands, MacGillivray threw long shadows over the entire expedition, trade generally and the prospects for any further activity in the area. Read together MacGillivray's *Wanderings* are a litany of depression, disaster, danger, monotony and chaos. The rewards stemming from the expedition were few and certainly financial success was out of the question.

The fact that MacGillivray chose to go back to Sydney in 1861 is significant. It is clear from his journals that he had no desire to be a fringe dweller. His self-respect was still very much intact, if tinctured with a wry acknowledgement of the situation in which he found himself. His private journals reveal a strong Christian belief, evident in his desire always to keep the

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[41] MacGillivray is listed as a steerage passenger. A 'Bowman' is also listed as is a 'Chinaman' so it would appear that a number of the crew of the *Julia Percy* also boarded the *Eagle*. '*Eagle* of Sydney I.D. Hartey, Master, Burthen 147 Tons from the Port of Rockhampton to Sydney, NSW, 17 December 1861.' State Records Authority of NSW: Shipping Master's Office; Passengers Arriving 1855 – 1922; NRS13278 X104-106, reel 409.

[42] MacGillivray, 'Wanderings in tropical Australia No.XI', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 April 1862, 4. In a similar way in a discussion of the needs of missionaries to obtain a mastery of native languages the missionary John Inglis commented: 'A trader may get along after a sort – may buy and sell, through the medium of a kind of broken, sandal-wood English, such as, "Me savy;" "Me want big fellow yam;" "This boy belong o' you?" "you too much like go Sydney;" and hold up three of his fingers, for three years, when the native understands him to mean three months.' John Inglis, *In the New Hebrides: reminiscences of missionary life and work, especially on the island of Aneityum, from 1850 till 1877* (London : T. Nelson and Sons, 1887), 129.

Sabbath wherever possible. MacGillivray consistently took the higher moral ground in his descriptions of the activities of his associates. The islands through which MacGillivray roamed were full of white settlers making their living however they were able. MacGillivray writes rather scornfully of them. Certainly his white associates in this particular venture were abhorrent to him. While the death of his friend Captain Paddon clearly influenced MacGillivray's actions he could certainly have continued his association with Captain Edwards who was considered by many in Sydney to be a gentleman of some standing. Edwards continued trading in the Torres Strait in partnership with Robert Towns well into the 1870s with a station at Darnley Island. Captain Banner also continued his association with the Torres Strait setting up a pearl shelling station at Warrior Island (Tutu).[43] However the desire to re-enter real society, real civilisation, is clear from MacGillivray's writings and the disastrous voyage of the *Julia Percy* and his stay on Lizard Island would take many years to overcome. While his thoughts occasionally dwelt on the 'old country' his ambitions were now firmly set on the colonial world and Sydney.

Despite the hardships endured during this chapter in MacGillivray's life the outcomes in terms of collecting could be said to have been valuable. MacGillivray's journal makes it clear that he had re-established contact with Hugh Cuming – a vital connection to the old networks in England. The *Proceedings for the Zoological Society* of 1862 feature descriptions of a number of items collected and sold by MacGillivray from his stay on Lizard Island and his voyages in the *Julia Percy.* John Gray of the British Museum described a new species of dolphin from two specimens sent by MacGillivray to Cuming who had transferred them to the Museum. The soaking and preparation of the dolphins' heads down the well was thus proved a worthwhile exercise.[44] Dr H. Dohrn described new shells including *Murex macgillivrayi,* again from Cuming's collection.[45] Dr L Pfeiffer described thirty-six new landshells from the collection of Cuming including four collected by MacGillivray – *Helix lizardensis, Helix banneri, Helicina yorkensis* and *Helicina reticulata.*[46] MacGillivray was also obviously working hard to establish himself in Sydney by maintaining his association and friendship with James Fowler Wilcox, by now an established natural history dealer in

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[43] William Banner was one of those who did go on to successfully exploit the resources in the area setting up a beche-de-mer and pearl shell base in 1868 in the Torres Strait and is regarded as a key figure in the development of the pearl shell industry. See *Triumph in the tropics : an historical sketch of Queensland compiled and edited by Sir Raphael Cilento ; with the assistance of Clem Lack ; for the Historical Committee of the Centenary Celebrations Council of Queensland* (Brisbane, Qld. : Smith & Paterson, 1959), 223.

[44] 'Notice of a new species of dolphin (Delphinus catalania), discovered in North Australia by Mr John MacGillivray'. *Proceedings of the . Zoological Society of London* (1862): 143-145.

[45] 'Descriptions of New Shells By Dr H. Dohrn' *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London,* (1862): 202-203.

[46] 'Descriptions of Thirty six new land shells, from the collection of H. Cuming, Esq. By Dr. L. Pfeiffer', *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London* (1862): 268-278.

Sydney and Grafton and by attempting to establish himself with the powers at the Sydney Museum.

In the few existing accounts of MacGillivray's life the period between 1858 and 1861 is glossed over and has never before been examined in any detail.[47] It is presented as a period of little interest to naturalists and is perhaps seen as an escape by MacGillivray from his past and the disgrace of his dismissal. What a closer analysis of the period, in the light of the full range of sources shows, is that this was a rich and fascinating segment of his life. These years are filled with active and profitable collecting, excitement, discovery and adventure. The dismissal from the *Herald* was certainly a setback to MacGillivray's career but it was by no means the end of it.

When examining a map of MacGillivray's wanderings throughout this period the striking feature is that the entire area is littered with reminders of the naturalist's past - Yule reef, Blackwood Island, Dayman Island, Rattlesnake Island, Kennedy Inlet, Herald's Surprise. The names read as a web of his friends, companions, associates and enemies - the courses that they took, the experiences they had. Their disasters and discoveries were spread across the landscape. MacGillivray's 1859-61 wanderings can be read as a map of his new companions, his altered life. A finch, a stick insect, a bat, a shell, a flower - all are markers of the people and places that define the period MacGillivray spent roaming the south-west Pacific, northern Australia and the Torres Strait. His collections and discoveries help to define his life and mark the limits of his travels, encounters, friendships and loves. Unlike some other naturalists MacGillivray showed no hesitation in bestowing the names of those to whom he felt indebted upon his new discoveries. His specimens from the period can be read as a new map. But they are perhaps more than that – these names mark his attempts at breaking back into his old circles and establishing himself in his new world. As such they become vital marks of renewal, hope and even reinvention.

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[47] For example – MacGillivray's ADB entry simply reads: 'In 1858-60 he was in the New Hebrides and returned to Sydney in 1861 after visiting Cape York.' Robert Ralph's 'John MacGillivray – His Life and Work' says only 'MacGillivray supported himself by commercial collecting; from 1858 to 1860 he was in the New Hebrides, in 1861 around the Torres Strait area,' … 'Ten articles entitled "Wanderings in Tropical Australia" appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* between January and march 1862, and another nine "*Scraps from journals in the South-west pacific*" were published in the *Empire* between April and June 1864.' Ian Loch in 'John MacGillivray', *Australian Shell News*, writes 'he became a professional collector and also involved in the sandalwood trade in New Caledonia and Vanuatu. Living by his wits, he sold skins and skulls, insects and land snails … In 1860 he left Vanuatu With William Banner in the "Julia Percy" for Lizard Island and Torres Straits were he seems to have been involved in beche-de-mer fisheries.' In Iredale's 'The Last Letters of John MacGillivray', *Australian Zoologist*, the chronology from MacGillivray's 'natural history notebook' is reproduced verbatim.

Chapter 10

Australian collector
1862 – 1866

On 17 December 1861 MacGillivray steamed back into Sydney on board the *Eagle*.[1] One of the first luxuries in which he would have indulged would have been to settle down with the paper and catch up on all the Sydney news. When his eyes fell on the front page of the *Sydney Morning Herald* he must have felt that the stars were aligning and that his return to civilization had come at exactly the right moment. The trustees of the Australian Museum had placed an advertisement seeking a Curator due to the death of the incumbent, Simon Rood Pittard Esq.[2] The trustees were seeking a 'gentleman' to classify and arrange the Museum's specimens, to superintend the management of the museum under the direction of the trustees, to deliver lectures on the collection and to undertake all the duties relating to correspondence and secretaryship that would arise. Gentlemen had until 1 January 1862 to submit their applications.

MacGillivray was re-entering the colony at a crucial stage. The 1850s and 60s marked an important shift in the development of science across the country. Museums were to form an important part of this movement. State based museums had been established for a number of years in New South Wales (1829), Tasmania (1843) and Victoria (1854). In 1862 two more museums opened – one in South Australia and one in the newly established colony of Queensland. These institutions along with the parallel development of botanic gardens and public libraries, provided new opportunities for individuals such as MacGillivray and were important to the development of science in the colony. Museums and universities acted as centres of scientific thought and activity. The network of scientific institutions across the country was growing and with it the feeling that the colony might develop some independence in terms of scientific and intellectual thought.[3] This new independence would also signal a freedom from some of the obligations and allegiances many felt were owed to their British colleagues and counterparts. This was made particularly clear in the museum world with the eventual questioning which took place regarding the natural assumption that collections made in the colony were destined for Britain. The explorer Ludwig Leichardt had argued for collections to be retained within the colony as early as the 1840s. In the 1860s Frederick McCoy, the curator of the National Museum in Melbourne, took up the call.[4]

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[1] State Records Authority of New South Wales: Shipping Master's Office; Passengers Arriving 1855-1922, NRS13278, x104-106, reel 409.

[2] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 December 1861, 1.

[3] Ann Moyal, *A bright and savage land* (Ringwood, Vic; New York, N.Y.: Penguin, 1993), 149.

The next chapter in MacGillivray's life would thread its way through some of these developments and debates as he attempted, for the second time, to establish himself as an independent scientific authority in colonial scientific circles. MacGillivray's experiences during this period demonstrate the complexity of the state of the development of scientific thought and institutions. His particular, and often peculiar, mix of talents, experience, connections and status mean that at certain times he was able to shift between the accepted modes in which colonial science was operating. At other times he was hemmed in by convention and held fast within social systems and networks from which he was unable to escape. His uneasy status reveals the subtle workings of the colonial social and scientific scene and the character of those intimately involved in its development.

Despite the growth of colonial museums in the 1860s professional scientific positions open to public competition were few and far between. For the most part the Sydney scientific scene still most resembled a select gentleman's club. Positions were obtained through the patronage of key figures or through the recommendations of luminary figures back in England for whom the ability to bestow opportunities for advancement based on colonial appointments was a doubly useful power. Firstly, it enabled them to place people who would support their views and interests in key positions throughout the empire.[5] Secondly, it opened up channels for collecting in far-flung locations otherwise not easily accessible. The open advertisement for a curator signalled a rare opportunity that might propel MacGillivray back into the world of respectable society and into the heart of the scientific establishment. The prospect of holding the position of curator held out the tantalising hope that his career would take a promising new trajectory – that it would reinstate him as something more than 'a mere collector'. It was an opportunity he could not afford to miss.

By 1861 the Australian Museum already had a considerable history behind it. The newly formed Philosophical Society of Australasia had first proposed a museum of natural history for the city of Sydney in 1821. Space for the museum was provided within the colonial secretary's offices and a collection, primarily geological in nature, was formed.[6] However as has been previously discussed Sydney's population was not yet able, or necessarily willing, to support either the Society or the Museum. The Society folded after only a year and the museum's collection sat unused and ignored until the idea of a museum was brought back on the agenda following Alexander Macleay's arrival in Sydney in 1826 to take up the post of Colonial Secretary.

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[4] Colin Finney, *Paradise Revealed: Natural History in nineteenth-century Australia* (Melbourne: Museum of Victoria, 1993), 2.
[5] *Ibid*, 3.
[6] Ronald Strahan, *Rare and curious specimens: an illustrated history of the Australian Museum, 1827-1979 / by Ronald Strahan with D.F. Branagan ...[et at]*, (Sydney: Australian Museum, 1979), 3.

From this point on the Australian Museum would be an institution that rose and fell on the fortunes, opinions and desires of an emerging Sydney scientific elite – the centre of which was the Macleay family. Their domination of the world of nineteenth century Australian science, most particularly in New South Wales, is well documented.[7] For sixty-five years Alexander Macleay, his sons William Sharp and George and his nephew, William John Macleay, formed the centre of Sydney's scientific elite. The Macleay family had a continuing presence in the management of the second iteration of the Sydney Museum from its inception in 1829 until the death of William John in 1891.

Opinions regarding the qualities of and contributions made by the Macleay family vary greatly. To many contemporaries and historians the Macleays brought a shining light of civilization to the young colony of Australia. Their graceful residence at Elizabeth Bay surrounded by its magnificent garden and home to a fine scientific library, was a tranquil haven into which men of learning from Australia and abroad were welcomed. The family's support of Sydney's fledgling institutions such as the Australian Museum, the Botanic Gardens, the University and numerous scientific bodies and groups stimulated growth and development of the city and its intellectuals. The various links that each Macleay cultivated with scientists and organisations back in Europe opened up channels of communication and discourse essential to the success and further development of science in the colony.

To others the Macleays were more accurately described as overbearing, arrogant, acquisitive bullies.[8] Successive members of the family dominated the scientific scene by intimidating those around them and destroying their enemies as they saw fit. Their primary goal appeared to be building their own reputations and collections at any cost. Seen in this light the contributions made by the Macleays and their supporters could be seen as limited at best, questionable at worst. Gerard Krefft, one time curator of the Australian Museum writing in 1874 commented that 'There is nothing too mean or too low for these two precious members of what is known in these parts as the "Macleay mob"'.[9]

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[7] See for example Peter Stanbury and Julian Holland (eds), *Mr Macleay's celebrated cabinet : the history of the Macleays and their museum* (Sydney: Macleay Museum, University of Sydney, 1988). Elizabeth Elliot, *Taste and science: the women of the Macleay family*, 1790-1850 (Glebe, N.S.W. : Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 1988). Robyn Stacey, *Museum: the Macleays, their collections and the search for order* (Port Melbourne, Vic. : Cambridge University Press, 2007). Julian Holland, 'Diminishing Circles: W.S. Macleay in Sydney, 1839-1865', *Historical Records of Australian Science*, 11, 2 (1996): 119-147.

[8] See for example Michael Van Leeuwen, 'Simon Rood Pittard – Curator of the Australian Museum', *Archives of Natural History*, 25 (1998): 9-24.

In order to appreciate the power and influence of the family it is necessary to examine their role in the development of the Australian Museum. The arrival of Alexander Macleay brought Sydney what it was lacking in the early 1820s – someone with sufficient resources, interest and influence to act as a driving force for the development of natural history in the infant colony and the ability to gather likeminded individuals around him. Prior to his emigration Macleay was an active member of the Linnean Society in London – acting as the Secretary of this organisation between 1798-1825. He was also an avid and active collector of insects having built up (by purchase) one of Europe's finest collections over many years. This collection travelled with him to Sydney and would form the basis of what was to become a massive and diverse collection extended by succeeding generations of the family.[10]

The exact nature of the influence wielded by Alexander Macleay during the earliest negotiations regarding the establishment of a museum is unclear. It is clear however that the first real activity occurred shortly after his appointment began. In 1829 Governor Darling appointed William Holmes as the first keeper of the Museum and Government Zoologist. A carpenter by trade, Holmes did not last long enough in the position to make a significant impact on the development of the organization. On 24 August 1831 he was killed by accidental discharge of his gun while collecting 'Birds and other Curiosities' in Moreton Bay.[11] Later appointees to the position may have seen his fate as a relatively gentle, or at least swift, one when compared to their own.

The collections were put in charge of William Galvin, an ex convict, now Government employee, along with a convict John Roach, a London trained taxidermist who acted as 'Collector and bird-stuffer'. In 1835, after he lobbied hard for the position, Dr George Bennett, a highly regarded naturalist and author, was appointed Secretary and Curator at an annual salary of £100 – a meagre salary for the time.

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[9] Gerard Krefft 'Letter to the editor of *Nature*, 20 March 1874. Extract from Krefft correspondence in Natural History Museum, London. Supplied by Julian Holland, September 2007.

[10] This collection would form the basis of the Macleay Museum at the University of Sydney, established c1888.

[11] Strahan, *Rare and curious specimens,* 11.

In 1836 a Committee of Superintendence was appointed to oversee museum operations. Alexander Macleay headed up the committee, which included a number of Sydney's most prominent citizens including George Macleay, Edward Deas Thomson, William Macarthur, Philip Parker King and William Branwhite Clarke. Alexander Macleay's influence would soon be usurped with the arrival in Sydney in 1839 of his eldest son, William Sharpe. Like his father, William Sharpe Macleay was an avid insect collector. Unlike Alexander, William Sharpe translated his interest in the natural world into the formulation of scientific theory. In 1819 and 1821 he published the two parts of a major work – *Horae Entomologicicae: or Essays on the Annulose Animals*. Within these volumes he put forward a theory of taxonomy that became known as the Circular or Quinarian System.[12] Although eventually discounted, the theory was widely debated and popularly supported by a number of prominent scientists and scientific bodies.[13] William Sharpe Macleay was appointed to the Committee of Superintendence of the Australian Museum in 1840 and became its chairman in 1849.

When Bennett was forced to resign from the curatorship in 1841 – said to be due to the inadequate salary - the committee appointed one of its own, William Branwhite Clarke as Curator and Secretary. Salary may have played a part in Bennett's decision, but some pressure may have been brought to bear by William Sharpe Macleay who wrote that Bennett was 'an idle dog that I was glad to get rid of'.[14] Clarke is best known as the 'father of Australian Geology'.[15] MacGillivray would remember him as the Minister who buried his old Captain, Owen Stanley, in Sydney in 1850[16]. His tenure as Curator and Secretary of the Australian Museum was relatively short as the Legislative Council abolished the position in 1843 on financial grounds. Clarke remained active in Museum matters and served as a Trustee from 1853 – 1873.

During his time as Curator Clarke spent little of his time at the Museum, working instead from his home in Parramatta. It was left to his 'Collector and Preserver', William Sheridan Wall, to see to the day-to-day maintenance and operation of the Museum. Wall was appointed to the position of Curator at some point in 1844. It was during Wall's curatorship that MacGillivray's thoughts regarding the Museum are first recorded. His comments were not complimentary. Although MacGillivray had visited the Museum when the *Fly* was in Sydney in 1842 he did not record his views. In 1847 during the voyage of the *Rattlesnake*, MacGillivray visited the Museum to see how it was progressing. His letters from the *Rattlesnake* paint a picture of a Museum sorely in need of funds and expertise. To Professor Edward Forbes he wrote of his disappointment in the institution:

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[12] The Quinarian system is explained by Holland as 'at any level of taxonomy, groups could be linked by a sequence of affinities into a circle of five elements, and that the elements of one circle could be linked by analogy to the five elements of another circle'. Julian Holland, 'Alexander Macleay (1767-1848) and William Sharp Macleay (1792-1865)', in Peter Stanbury and Julian Holland (eds), *Mr Macleay's celebrated cabinet,* 20.

[13] Mario A. Di Gregoria, 'The Uniqueness of Charles Darwin: His Reading of W.S. Macleay's Horae Entomologicae', *Historical Records of Australian Science*, 11, 2 (1996): 103.

[14] Holland, 'Diminishing Circles', 121.

[15] Ann Moyal, 'Clarke, William Branwhite (1798 - 1878)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography Online*, http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A030395b.htm?hilite=branwhite (accessed 2 August 2010).

[16] Stanley and Branwhite were friends. Stanley had told Branwhite that should he die in Australia he would like to be buried at St Thomas's, North Sydney where Branwhite had become vicar in 1846 – a position he held until his retirement in 1871. Jordan Goodman, *The Rattlesnake: A Voyage of Discovery to the Coral Sea* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), 275.

> Natural history, unlike everything else, does not appear to make much progress in Sydney. The temporary, small, and crowded museum has been steadily merging into a state of chaos ever since I first saw it five years ago.[17]

He added that many of the once valuable specimens he viewed were in a wretched state of decay and a number of the birds were so poorly prepared that their stuffing was visible. He noted that a more suitable building was underway to house the collections and hoped that this would improve the standard of display and preservation. His next visit, two years later in 1849, did not reassure him. To John Gould he reported that, despite the completion of two rooms of the new building, the situation was no better than before and that the whole collection was 'deposited on the floor and elsewhere in the most beautiful confusion'. He added condescendingly:

> I gave them lately a set of Australian shells several hundred species done up neatly on white covered pasteboard – named when possible, with the localities, for the purpose of shaming them into something like the regularity to be seen in Museums at home.[18]

While MacGillivray visited the Museum, as we have already noted his shipmate Huxley was, wisely, ingratiating himself with the Macleay family. He greatly enjoyed his visits to Elizabeth Bay to converse with William Sharpe and received great encouragement from the older man with whom he kept up a correspondence for many years after the *Rattlesnake*'s departure from Sydney. Macleay's support was significant to Huxley who wrote in 1851 'I have not forgotten, nor ever shall forget, your kindness to me at a time when a little appreciation and encouragement were more grateful to me and of more service than they will perhaps ever be again'.[19] Huxley, who was still at that stage seeking professional appointments, also mentioned that Macleay's support would be welcome should any suitable posts become available in Australia. Huxley, at least, understood the value of Macleay's networks in the colony.

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[17] MacGillivray to Forbes, 12 October 1847, John MacGillivray, *Notebook 1844-1849*, microform - original in private collection, (Hobart: State Library of Tasmania).

[18] MacGillivray to Gould, 12 May 1849, John MacGillivray, *Notebook 1844-1849*, microform - original in private collection, (Hobart: State Library of Tasmania).

[19] *Life and letters of Thomas Henry Huxley* by his son, Leonard Huxley (London : Macmillan, 1900), 2 Vols., Vol.1, 95.

With the new Museum building completed in 1852, the Committee of Superintendence felt that an updated method of administration was required. In 1853 the Museum Act was passed into law. This Act created a body of twenty-four trustees – eleven holding their positions ex-officio and others appointed on the basis of their community standing, interest and expertise.[20] A number of the original members of the Committee of Superintendence were included. The inclusion of two members of the Macleay family as trustees – George and William Sharpe – ensured the family's continuing influence over the institution. William Sharpe has been credited as the driving force behind the Act itself.[21]

The Trustees set about making their mark on the administration of the Museum. One of their first acts was to appoint George French Angas to a newly created position of Secretary at a salary of £300. Angas was a widely travelled artist and writer who, as we have seen, had an interest in shell collecting.[22] The relationship between Wall and Angas was always an unhappy one. The governance of the organisation was murky with the division of duties, responsibilities and authority between the two not ever made sufficiently clear. Angas's salary exceeded Wall's by £50 despite the latter having been employed for far longer within the institution. Accommodation within the Museum was another issue as both resided on the premises. With Angas's employment, Wall's family was forced to squeeze into a few rooms on the ground floor and in the basement. In 1858 open conflict flared between the pair and, despite belated recommendations being made outlining their relative duties, Wall was soon forced to retire, much to Angas's satisfaction.[23]

Governor William Denison entrusted George Macleay, then travelling to London, with the task of consulting with the renowned Professor Richard Owen regarding a replacement for Wall. It was through such consultations and recommendations that figures such as Owen influenced scientific thought and development throughout the British Empire. These were the mechanisms of scientific imperialism that dominated colonial science throughout the nineteenth century.[24]

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[20] Strahan, *Rare and curious specimens,* 21

[21] *Ibid*

[22] MacGillivray would have encountered Angas when the *Herald* was based in Sydney.

[23] Strahan, *Rare and curious specimens,* 24. Wall found the front doors to the Museum open and asked a messenger to fetch the keys so that he could lock the premises. This request was refused on the orders of Angas. It transpired that Angas had insisted that the doors remain open to disperse the smell of dog faeces that had been left on the steps of the Museum. The dog belonged to Wall.

Denison was determined that this was to be a new type of scientific curator - a curator that could 'have a store of personal knowledge which would qualify him to lead the public taste, and to speak with authority upon most if not all subjects connected with Natural History'.[25] Denison also felt that with such a Curator the position of Secretary would no longer be necessary. When Angas was informed of this he resigned in disgust.

The salary of the post of Curator was increased to entice a suitably qualified person – £700 was initially set aside although when the appointment came £500 was found to be sufficient. The successful gentleman was one of Owen's protégées – Simon Rood Pittard who travelled to Australia and attended his first meeting at the Museum in March 1860. To assist him with his scientific duties a young German born scientist, Gerard Krefft, was appointed to the position of Assistant Curator in June of the same year. Krefft's appointment was the subject of some debate as it was initially made by Sir William Denison without reference to the Trustees. William Sharpe objected to the action and insisted on an application process. This was duly conducted and Krefft's appointment was eventually confirmed. Pittard's experience at the Australian Museum highlights the peculiar pressures and political manoeuvrings present in the world of Sydney's scientific circles and particularly within and between the Trustees of the Museum itself. Pittard wrote to Owen of his impressions of William Sharpe Macleay:

> I expected to find him a good friend; at all events an intelligent, just and considerate man. But I find instead a very rude mannered, overbearing, insolent old man. I heard in England that he was bad tempered but he seems to me to be worse than that – an evil disposed and delighting in malice. I have not seen much of him, but, as to his intelligence, I have not yet found out anything more than would make a first rate curiosity dealer; he is a catalogue in breeches – that's all I can make out of his scientific accomplishments ... If science usually produced Macleays it ought to be routed from the world as a nuisance and an evil – but, thank God, it is not so ...[26]

A few months later again to Owen he confessed his troubles in relation to dealing with the Trustees of the Museum. He wrote:

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[24] Ann Moyal, 'Sir Richard Owen and his influence on Australian Zoological and Paleontological Science', *Records of the Australian Academy of Science*, 3 (1976): 41.

[25] Strahan, *Rare and curious specimens*, 25.

[26] Simon Rood Pittard to Richard Owen on William Sharpe Macleay quoted in Michael Van Leeuwen, 'Simon Rood Pittard – Curator of the Australian Museum', *Archives of Natural History*, 25 (1998): 18.

> They are genial gentlemen enough but utterly thoughtless and careless about the museum and used to follow Macleay. Hence all Macleay's freaks and insolences are accepted and endorsed by them. …There is no hope of my achieving anything important here until Macleay is gathered to his fathers.[27]

The problems alluded to in this letter regarding issues with the Trustees would be an ongoing concern for many years to come. Unfortunately for Pittard, time was not on his side. Already suffering with tuberculosis when he arrived in the colony, his condition soon worsened. In June 1861 he was granted leave to recuperate but died two months later. His able Assistant Curator Gerard Krefft stepped in to act in the position of Curator. It was a position he was ready and eager to take on, having, due to Pittard's poor health, undertaken most of the scientific duties on behalf of his superior for much of the duration of Pittard's tenure.

It was in this context that the position of Curator was advertised in September 1861 and caught the eye of MacGillivray after his years of wandering. MacGillivray felt that the position of Curator at the Australian Museum was one he was well qualified to assume and he set about writing his letter of application to the Trustees. Dated 31 January 1861, MacGillivray stated that he had been working in the South West Pacific and Torres Strait and that he had only recently returned to the colony. Had he been here longer, he stated, he would have taken the opportunity of calling on the Trustees in person. His references and testimonials were, unfortunately, on board the *Julia Percy*, which he daily expected to arrive. In the meantime he hoped 'that the Trustees would allow me the opportunity of being examined before them regarding 1st Ability and 2nd Character – as I am well aware that many statements regarding the latter have gone abroad some few years ago – and before I left Sydney for New Caledonia'.[28] MacGillivray was obviously aware that his reputation was something that had to be salvaged.

MacGillivray's first application is addressed from Mr Guilfoyle's at Double Bay. Mr Guilfoyle was Michael Guilfoyle, one of Australia's most prominent nurserymen at the time.[29] It is likely that MacGillivray first encountered Guilfoyle at meetings of the

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[27] *Ibid*

[28] John MacGillivray, Letter of Application, 31 December 1861, Gerard Krefft - Papers, ca.1856-1895, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, ML MSS A262-A 268.

[29] Guilfoyle had emigrated to Australia in 1853 and had initially established a nursery at Redfern. When his Redfern establishment ended in failure Guilfoyle established a large nursery at Double Bay. This venture was far more successful and the nursery became a Sydney landmark. The house from which MacGillivray's letter would have been written, Morts Cottage, still stands today. As well as his flourishing nursery Guilfoyle is credited with designing some of Sydney's most famous gardens including that of Greenoaks, now known as Bishopscourt. Interestingly Guilfoyle had also been a gardener at the Tichborne estates. When Thomas

Horticultural Improvement Society of Sydney in 1856 and the two had obviously become friendly. Guilfoyle's son William, who would go on to become the Curator of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens, would have just celebrated his twenty-first birthday when MacGillivray arrived from his adventures in the South West Pacific. William would have found MacGillivray's adventures and collections intriguing and in later years would list MacGillivray, along with William Sharpe Macleay, as one of the great influences of his career.[30] MacGillivray had quickly settled in at Guilfoyle's house, writing his application for the Museum and also successfully selling the story of his latest adventures as *Wanderings in Tropical Australia*, to the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

MacGillivray's second letter of application was written on 18 January.[31] *The Julia Percy* had failed to arrive and so, MacGillivray wrote, he took the opportunity of outlining his credentials for the Trustees as he felt (or perhaps hoped) that he would be quite unknown to some of them. MacGillivray stated his qualifications under the headings of natural history, literary ability and lecturing. He stated 'to Natural History I have been devoted since boyhood, and for the last 19 years it has been my profession'. He detailed his work on board the *Fly*, *Rattlesnake* and *Herald*. He had, he stated, spent considerable time as a medical student in the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons at Edinburgh, of which his father was the curator. His *Narrative of the Voyage of the Rattlesnake* was testament to his literary ability but he pointed out that he had considerable published material in journals and magazines from his earliest publication in 1840 of an essay on comparative phrenology through to his latest *Wanderings in Tropical Australia* now being published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. His lecturing had begun in the winter of 1840-41 with a series on Zoology in Dunfermline to an audience of upwards of 600 persons. He also claimed that he had prepared and delivered zoological lectures in Aberdeen as part of his late father's first course there after his appointment as Regius Professor of Natural History. All of these claims, it appeared, were not enough to impress the Trustees.

MacGillivray's letters of application were written with the obvious intention of convincing the trustees that he was far more than a simple collector. His opening remarks from his first application made this clear when he described himself as having been working in the

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Castro appeared in Sydney claiming to be the lost Roger Tichborne Guilfoyle was one of those who supported his claims.

[30] Alan Gross, 'Guilfoyle, William (1840-1912)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography Online*, http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A040348b.htm?hilite=guilfoyle (accessed 2 August, 2010). William Guilfoyle went on to participate in the *Challenger* expedition in 1868. He is best known as the Curator of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens to which he was appointed in 1873.

[31] John MacGillivray, Letter of application, 18 January 1861 [sic], Australian Museum Archives, AMA BB:55.61.

islands of the south-west Pacific and Torres Strait as a 'collecting zoologist'. He was careful to state that natural history is his 'profession' with his employment by the Admiralty being the first qualification put forward. He unashamedly used his father's position and his association with colleagues such as the late Edward Forbes, Professor of Natural History at Edinburgh University and George Wilson, Regius Professor of Technology at the University of Edinburgh and first Director of the Industrial Museum of Scotland, as old university acquaintances to further impress upon the trustees not just his experience but also his suitability in terms of background and associations.

MacGillivray's attempts to establish his social as well as professional credentials are a clear demonstration of the way in which class acted as a great divider in Sydney's scientific circles. The gentlemen's club that formed the core of the scientific scene was made up of dedicated amateurs, generally employed within the colonial administration, who cited various forms of natural history pursuits as a hobby or occupation in which they could afford to indulge. Collectors, as people who required natural history to pay an income, were condemned to a lower social standing from which it was difficult, if not impossible to escape. This was the gulf that MacGillivray attempted to negotiate. He did not fit neatly into either camp. He teetered between the classes. He blurred the distinctions. Never is the haunting nature of his fall from grace in 1855 more evident. His applications focus on his appointments and activities prior to his dismissal, harking back to the days in which he was employed in respected positions and mixing in exalted circles. He carefully skates over his activities of the last three years because his life as a trader and specimen dealer would now be held against him. The need to earn a living through his profession would be his undoing. In his examination of natural history in nineteenth century Australia, historian Colin Finney states that:

> While often on friendly terms with the genteel military and civil servants, paid collectors were always junior partners rather than equals. Echoing a distinction rife in Victorian England, the remuneration collectors received, for what amateur naturalists did for love alone, lowered their social acceptability.[32]

In his insightful analysis of Victorian science and the career of Joseph Hooker, Jim Endersby emphasises that this divide between 'love and lucre' was particularly evident in those areas of science which largely depended on collecting work undertaken by unpaid enthusiasts.[33] MacGillivray waited and waited, hoping to hear something from the Trustees regarding the curatorship. MacGillivray's next letter to the trustees of the Museum is, perhaps, evidence of his resignation to his fate. In May he wrote once again, this time offering specimens for sale.[34] He makes no mention of the vacant curatorship. It is likely that MacGillivray required money and that having waited as long as he could for news from the Museum he set about earning an income the only way that lay open to him. Whatever the situation it was an action that would have confirmed him in the view of the trustees as being a dealer, a collector available for hire, and certainly of too low a status to be considered suitable for the vacant curatorship.

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[32] Finney, *Paradise Revealed*, 3.

[33] Jim Endersby, *Imperial Nature: Joseph Hooker and the Practices of Victorian Science* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 2.

The minutes of the Trustee's meeting state that 'The Acting Secretary was directed to inform Mr MacGillivray, that the Trustees are always willing to purchase such specimens as may be desirable for the Museum at reasonable prices but that the Trustees cannot bind themselves beforehand to purchase certain collections at a fixed rate of charges'.[35] How well apprised MacGillivray was of the situation regarding the recruitment process is impossible to tell, however his frustration is evident in his chronological listing of his activities when for 1862 the entry reads sadly and simply 'In and about Sydney. A year lost'.[36]

MacGillivray could not have realised that even before he wrote his first letter of application the position of curator of the Australian Museum had become a political battleground. In November 1861 the Trustees had received a letter from the Colonial Secretary's Office regarding the appointment of a suitable replacement for Pittard. The letter concluded with what was, to the Trustees, a disturbing comment to the effect that any appointment made by the Trustees would be subject to the approval of the Colonial Secretary.[37] To the Trustees this was unacceptable. The letter triggered a two and a half year battle as to who had the right to appoint the curator. It was on individuals such as MacGillivray that this dispute would have the greatest impact.

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[34] MacGillivray to Trustees, letter read to Trustee meeting, 1 May 1862. Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1 May 1862, Australian Museum Archives. See also John MacGillivray, *Natural History Notebook 1855-66*, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, ML B944. MacGillivray's natural history notebook lists the prices of the specimens under Sydney Museum Prices. Skins of Birds and Mammalia, Stuffed Fishes, Crustacea, Land Shells, Human Skulls and Zoophytes.

[35] Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1 May 1862, Australian Museum Archives.

[36] John MacGillivray, *Natural History Notebook 1855-66*, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, ML B944.

[37] Letter, Colonial Secretary's Office to the Trustees, 19 November 1861, in Australian Museum Annual Report for 1861, Australian Museum Archives.

MacGillivray did make himself known to at least one of the Trustees of the Museum with productive results. Dr James Cox was a prominent Sydney medical practitioner. He had grown up on his father's station, Fernhill at Mulgoa, and had always had a keen interest in Australia's natural history.[38] Cox trained as a doctor in Edinburgh and had returned to practice in Sydney in 1859. He was a key early member of Sydney's Entomological society and in 1862 was elected as its first Secretary. Cox's real passion however was shells. At some point during this period Cox employed MacGillivray to assist him in classifying and arranging his land shell collection and to assist him with the publication of a catalogue of the same. Cox's catalogue appeared in print in 1864. In the introduction Cox acknowledged the services of MacGillivray 'who has given me much valuable information as to the habitat of the various species'.[39] The employment of MacGillivray by Cox and the publication of Cox's own collection highlights two of the issues that were to plague the Australian Museum for the next decade and would eventually cause scandal and distress on an unprecedented scale. In 1874 Gerard Krefft wrote of Cox that he:

> … is a distinguished member of the University of Sydney, he is an examiner in medicine and all that sort of thing but spells "robbery" with a single b and has other eccentric habits. …Dabbling in shells without knowing their former inhabitants of his empty houses he was elected a member of the Board of Trustees and immediately distinguished himself by taking our customers away from us. …The Museum, which formerly obtained many things as presents or by paying a reasonable price, was completely put "out of Court" and after an attempt or two to purchase for us and coming into collision with the Doctor in his capacity as dealer I retired from the contest. …[40]

Krefft further complained that Dr Cox would take 'every opportunity to let people know that he was a "trustee" or Director of the Museum. In this manner all kinds of things reached him, the simple minded donors believing that their presents would really benefit the Museum'.[41] The simple fact was that the collections of a number of the Trustees of the Museum were larger and more comprehensive than those of the institution they were supposedly responsible for. The gentlemen collectors such as the Macleays, Cox and other trustees such as Edward Hill, used their positions as Trustees of the Museum to advance their own collecting activities, a clear conflict of interest which no one, during the 1860s at least, was prepared to question.[42]

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[38] Ruth Teale, 'Cox, James Charles (1834 - 1912)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography Online*, http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A030521b.htm?hilite=cox (accessed 2 August, 2010).

[39] James C. Cox, *Catalogue of Australian Land Shells* (Sydney: John Alex Engel, 1864).

[40] Gerard Krefft, *Autobiographical notes and report 1874*, National Library of Australia, MSS 3321.

[41] *Ibid*

[42] Strahan, *Rare and curious specimens*, 28.

William John Macleay was the key figure in the Macleay family from early in the 1860s. In 1865 he inherited the family collection and the residence at Elizabeth Bay. William John would be responsible for a vast increase in the size of the Macleay collection and undertook collecting on a scale unknown or imagined by any of his predecessors. This brought him into direct conflict with Krefft, a conflict that would eventually destroy the Curator.

Krefft's other significant complaint regarding his Trustees was their employment of museum staff in order to build their own collections. He stated that his staff were 'all more or less in the pay of individual Trustees, Mr Masters receiving £2 a week from Mr. Macleay. Thorpe was constantly selling birds, etc. to Mr Hill[43], who got him an increase in his salary; the two Barneses worked for Dr Cox ....'. George Masters, who was Krefft's assistant curator was certainly employed by William John Macleay to collect on his behalf.[44] Talented professional collectors were something that the Trustees appreciated. These were not men who would willingly dirty their own hands in order to acquire a specimen and so they depended on such men to enhance their personal collections.

When Pittard had been appointed it had been on the recommendation of Richard Owen. When the time came to replace him the Trustees were still of the opinion that they would have to look overseas in order to find a suitably qualified person. They expected that they would most likely have to consult once again with Owen or, now Professor, Huxley in order to locate their man.[45] The ongoing dispute with the government meant in some ways it transpired that the person was less important than the principle. The Trustees were more interested in pressing their right to appoint who they chose rather than in who the actual person would be. In his analysis of the incident, historian Michael Van Leewen argues that this drawn-out battle was the only reason that the trustees overcame their reluctance to appoint Krefft, a non-Briton and not a member of Macleay's inner circle, to the position. Krefft's appointment marked the beginning of a movement toward independence for colonial science.[46] In the end it took three years for Krefft's appointment to the position to be confirmed by the colonial government with him officially taking up the appointment in

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[43] The same E.S. Hill that wrote the letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* regarding Captain Denham's actions in the search for Benjamin Boyd.

[44] In 1874 Masters accepted £300 to become the first curator of the Macleay Museum – a rise of £100 over his assistant curator salary at the Australian Museum. G.P Whitley, 'George Masters (1837-1912), *Australian Dictionary of Biography Online*, http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A050253b.htm (accessed 2 August, 2010).

[45] Van Leeuwen, 'Simon Rood Pittard – Curator of the Australian Museum', 20.

[46] Moyal, 'Sir Richard Owen and his Influence on Australian Zoological and Palaeontological Science', 53.

May 1864.[47] By this stage MacGillivray had long given up and was seeking his fortune elsewhere. Krefft's appointment and career are inevitably coloured by later events of his curatorship, which ended in his dramatic dismissal and forcible ejection from the Museum building by two prize-fighters employed by E.S. Hill for the task.[48]

Krefft's account of his time at the Museum, written as a statement following the conflict and his dismissal, is a remarkable document. Undoubtedly not an objective assessment of the people it depicts it is, nevertheless, a fascinating picture of the figures involved. In particular the statement highlights the power and influence wielded by the Macleays. Krefft makes direct reference to MacGillivray and his attempts to secure work at the Museum. Krefft remarks on the recruitment process that:

> The late John MacGillivray, the well known naturalist of "H.M.S Rattlesnake" was one of the competitors, and this gentleman would certainly have carried the day had not the Macleays hated him thoroughly because he was a clever man. I confess Mr. MacGillivray (with all his failings) was superior to myself.[49]

Whatever opinion one has regarding the Macleay family, their influence and significance is undoubted. Having the patronage of this powerful family and their supporters was an essential ingredient for success. MacGillivray's failure to ingratiate himself effectively closed the world of respectable Sydney science to him. The gentlemen of this circle were willing to trade with him, deal with him, employ him on their own terms, but they would never admit him into their select circles, would never view him as an equal, would not allow him to clamber back up the social scale.

Little is known of MacGillivray's thoughts, movements and activities for the years of 1862 and 1863. After his 'lost year' of 1862 his one remark concerning the following year is that he 'went to Melbourne in March'.[50] While in Melbourne he visited Melbourne's National Museum. The National Museum of Melbourne, according to MacGillivray 'a most absurd name',[51] was also at a crucial period of growth and development. The proposal to form a Museum of natural history was put before the Lieutenant Governor of Victoria, Charles La

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[47] Strahan, *Rare and curious specimens,* 29.

[48] Gerard Krefft, *Autobiographical notes and report 1874*, National Library of Australia, MSS 3321. Also see Strahan, *Rare and curious specimens,* 34.

[49] Krefft states that MacGillivray was one of the applicants for the position of Assistant Curator in 1860. This is unlikely. More likely is that Krefft has confused the two applications processes as MacGillivray's applications for the position are contained in Krefft's papers at the Mitchell library.

[50] John MacGillivray, *Natural History Notebook 1855-66*, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, ML B944.

[51] MacGillivray to Ramsey, 19 August 1865, E. P. Ramsay - papers, being mainly correspondence relating to natural history, 1860-1912, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, MLMSS 563/3, microfilm CY2321.

Trobe in 1853. This proposal was accepted and a collection began to be formed based at the Assay Office under the supervision of the Surveyor-General, Andrew Clarke, and the first curator of the Museum, Government Zoologist, William Blandowski.[52] In a controversial move the Museum was relocated within Melbourne University in 1856, largely due to lobbying by the then Professor of Natural History, Frederick McCoy.[53] McCoy was appointed as the Museum's first Director in 1858 and a new building for exhibitions opened in 1864 within the University grounds.

It is likely that MacGillivray called on McCoy. He certainly visited the National Museum and made a close examination of the displays. His natural history notebook contains some detailed notes concerning 'a sketch showing the geological position in which skulls and other portions of the skeleton of a dingo were found by Mr Campbell in 1857'. MacGillivray felt unconvinced by the geology in the sketch. His notes read as though he was planning to make these observations known – either in a letter to the paper or perhaps to McCoy. Either course of action would not have necessarily endeared him to the scientific authorities in Victoria. MacGillivray also made a careful study of the Victorian gold diggings. Later that year he wrote to his sister and brother-in-law telling them that '…while visiting the Australian gold-fields I kept both eyes open, and picked up a deal of practical knowledge, which will probably be of service to me…'.[54]

MacGillivray had another reason for visiting the Victorian Colony. One event that may have drawn him south was the arrival of at least four of his younger sisters to the colony. In the midst of notes on natural history contained in MacGillivray's working notebook for the period, four pages are devoted to constructing a family tree. This is a rare personal interlude in his otherwise business-like writings. MacGillivray's parents' and siblings' birth, marriage and death details are recorded - not a small task for a man with eleven siblings. This family tree appears just before the notes MacGillivray made while visiting the Melbourne Museum. It is probable that they were made during a small family reunion that may have taken place in 1863. The MacGillivray sisters – Isabella, Maggie, Williamina, and Caroline arrived in 1862 on the *Result* seeking new lives in Australia working as governesses.[55] The sisters had been sponsored by the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, which had been founded the same year. This society made interest-free loans to suitable women who wished to travel to British colonies to find work but who lacked the capital to undertake the journey. The women who made use of the scheme were largely seeking work as educators or governesses. The scheme was a relatively short-lived one as it was soon realised that the great demand in the colonies was for working class women willing to undertake more menial labour – especially domestic service.[56]

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[52] Ian Wilkison, 'The Battle for the Museum: Frederick McCoy and the Establishment of the National Museum of Victoria at the University of Melbourne', *Historical Records of Australian Science*, 11, 1 (1996): 2.
[53] *Ibid*
[54] Patrick Beaton, 'A Martyr to Science', *Good Words*, July (1868): 428.
[55] Patricia Clarke, *The Governesses: Letters from the Colonies 1862-1882* (Melbourne: Hutchison, 1985), 31.

In 1862 Isabella was 39, Williamina was 37, Marion was 36, Caroline was 24 and Maggie was 22. Their mother and father had both died in 1852. It is not known how the sisters supported themselves following the death of their parents but, given the continual financial difficulties of the family, it can be assumed that they would have struggled. At some point Marion had arrived in Australia, married James Inglis and settled in Williamstown. Isabella had been working as a governess in Scotland since 1845.[57] Paul Howard MacGillivray (born in 1834) had already emigrated – arriving in Australia the year of John's dismissal from the *Herald*, 1855. With two brothers and a sister already in the colony, Australia beckoned and the sisters decided to seek their fortune there. Paul had followed the opposite career path to his brother John. Originally training in natural history in Aberdeen, upon his father's death he changed course to undertake medical training, which he completed in London in 1855. On arrival in Sydney he took up residence in Williamstown, Victoria. Just before his sisters' arrival in 1862, he was appointed to the important new post of resident surgeon at Bendigo hospital. Isabella reported that this position kept him so busy that he could not spare a day to come to meet them. He did however keep his residence in Williamstown for his sisters' use, much to their delight as they had expected to stay in a boarding house until they had secured positions.[58]

In many ways Paul Howard MacGillivray pursued natural history in Victoria far more successfully than his brother John. His flourishing medical career freed him from depending on natural history and he was able to pursue (and indulge) his passion along gentlemanly lines. Paul's contribution to natural history in Victoria was significant. His particular field of study was Bryozoa.[59] In 1857 he was elected to the Philosophical Institute of Victoria and contributed a number of articles to the society's transactions. Paul worked closely with Frederick McCoy from the National Museum of Melbourne.[60]

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[56] A. James Hammerton, *Emigrant Gentlewomen: Genteel Poverty and Female Emigration 1830-1914* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1979), 127.

[57] Dr George Johnston, a colleague in natural history of William MacGillivray, had helped to secure Isabella a situation in Berwick on Tweed. In 1847, in another letter, William thanked James Harley, another naturalist colleague, for an offer of a position of governess made to one of his daughters which he refused as the salary of £20 was not considered sufficient to compensate her for both the outlay that the position would entail and the distance from friends and family that taking the position would require. W. MacGillivray to Harley, 1 February 1847, Harley Correspondence, Leicester and Rutland Record Office, 13D56/7, f.8.

[58] I. MacGillivray to Rye, 24 September 1862, British Women's Emigration Association Records [microform], Letterbooks 1862- 1882, National Library of Australia, M468. Sections from letter are quoted in Clarke, *The Governesses*, 66.

MacGillivray's newly arrived sisters moved to Ballarat where they established a small school.[61] John MacGillivray kept in touch, in particular with Paul and another sister Anne Dorothea who settled in New Zealand but contact was obviously limited. Perhaps too many years, too many miles and too many experiences had separated MacGillivray from what remained of his kin. It is interesting to imagine a picture of this family gathering, so distant from their home and their former lives, John, with his notebook in hand, sketching out the family history; a family he had become increasingly distant from. Emigration had become the answer for the MacGillivray children all of whom, except one, left Scotland and emigrated either to Australia or New Zealand.

MacGillivray's next known movement took place in late June 1864 when he set out to visit his old friend James Fowler Wilcox at his home in South Grafton. Wilcox and MacGillivray had been friends since their days on board the *Rattlesnake*.[62]

The two had parted company when the *Rattlesnake* set sail for England after the death of Captain Stanley in 1850. As with a number of the other young men on board it was during one of the visits of the *Rattlesnake* to Sydney that Wilcox met and fell in love with his future wife, Mary West the daughter of Obed West and granddaughter of Thomas West. From humble convict beginnings the West family had grown into major landholders in the Paddington area in Sydney. Members of the *Rattlesnake*'s crew were often entertained by Obed West who invited them to go shooting on his property at Barcom Glen. This type of entertainment would no doubt have appealed to keen shooters such as Wilcox and MacGillivray, the added incentive (apart from West's daughters) being that the property was famed for its bird life.[63]

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[59] Commonly known as sea-mosses

[60] D. A. Brown, 'MacGillivray, Paul Howard (1834 - 1895)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography Online*, http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A050180b.htm?hilite=macgillivray (accessed 2 August, 2010).

[61] Clarke, *The Governesses*, 66.

[62] Born in Somerset, England, Wilcox was two years younger than MacGillivray. Many accounts have Wilcox practising natural history from the age of 16 under the tutelage of Owen Stanley's father, the Bishop of Norwich. These same accounts also place Wilcox on board HMS *Blazer* accompanying Owen Stanley as he conveyed Sir John Franklin on his last disastrous voyage. See See Hubert Massey Whittell, *The literature of Australian birds : a history and a bibliography of Australian ornithology, Part 2. A bibliography of Australian ornithology 1618 to 1950 with biographies of authors, collectors and others* (Perth : Paterson Brokensha, 1954), 773-4. Also J.H. Maiden, 'Records of Australian Botanists', *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales*, Vol. IV (1921): 60-132 and 150-169. It would appear that this is an error that has been consistently reproduced. Goodman states that Wilcox was a groom in Bishop Stanley's household who, expressing a desire to pursue natural history, was appointed to the *Rattlesnake* in order to collect on behalf of the Museum of Norwich. With no naval experience he was appointed as an able seaman with special responsibilities for Owen Stanley's cabin. See Goodman, *The Rattlesnake*, 32. From these humble beginnings Wilcox grew into a naturalist of considerable ability who was highly regarded by his contemporaries and was obviously liked and respected by MacGillivray.

Wilcox and Mary quickly formed a strong attachment. In 1849 Wilcox wrote to Mary and stated that 'I trust the time will shortly come when neither seas or land shall part us'.[64] While MacGillivray took his wife and child back to England Wilcox sought, and was granted, approval to remain in the colony and seek his fortune in Australia. In 1851 the couple married and settled in Sydney. MacGillivray claimed some of the responsibility for Wilcox's decision. In a letter to John Gould in 1855 he wrote:

> ...Mr Wilcox ... has been established in business in Sydney since the Rattlesnake left. I know him well as it was to a certain extent by my advice that he applied for his discharge and determined to remain in Sydney and set up a "bird shop".[65]

Wilcox established his 'bird shop' and taxidermy business on Hunter Street in Sydney in around 1852.[66] MacGillivray kept in touch with Wilcox and visited him often while the *Herald* was based in Sydney. In the same letter to Gould in 1855, MacGillivray was forced to refute Gould's allegation that he had been selling specimens to other parties in England (a Mr Stevens) - an accusation that was raised in the charges against MacGillivray during his dismissal enquiry. MacGillivray's defence to Gould was that William Milne, Kew's collector on board the *Herald*, had given Wilcox shells from the Isle of Pines, Anietyum and Lord Howe Islands. As Milne was, in MacGillivray's words 'a mere gardener and nothing else', MacGillivray stated that he was in the habit of writing the names of all of the natural history objects on his boxes for him. This, MacGillivray argued, would account for specimens appearing to have been transmitted to other people from him. This account appears unlikely. Far more believable is that MacGillivray kept duplicate material and gave them to his old friend Wilcox when the opportunity arose.

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[63] In his memoirs of early Sydney, Obed West recalled that the swamp at Barcom Glen '...swarmed with aquatic birds of every description – red bills, water hens, bitterns, quail, frequently all kinds of ducks and when in season, snipe, landrails, and at all times bronze-winged pigeons could be had in abundance. Brush wallabies were also very numerous in the vicinity, and many scores of them I have shot'. Marriot Edward West (ed), *Memoirs of Obed West: a portrait of early Sydney* (Bowral, N.S.W. : Barcom Press, 1988), 36. Obed West originally published his memoirs as a series of articles for the *Sydney Morning Herald.* These were published in 1882. In the same year Edward Hordern and Sons reprinted the articles in fortnightly instalments as 'Old and New Sydney'.

[64] Wilcox to West, May 7 1849, Wilcox family papers, 1846-1977, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, MLMSS 4578.

[65] MacGillivray to Cuming, 14 February 1855, Thomas Eyton Papers, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, B Ey83.

[66] Wilcox placed advertisements in the *Sydney Morning Herald* stating that he would purchase live birds, collections of birds, skins, animals, shells, insects, minerals, opossum skins and all kinds of natural curiosities. See *Sydney Morning Herald,* 23 April 1853, 5. In Waugh and Cox's Sydney Directory Wilcox is listed as a taxidermist having premises at 53 Hunter Street. It would appear that the original location was at 30 Hunter Street.

In around 1857 Wilcox's health began to deteriorate and he gave up his Hunter Street business. He accompanied his father-in-law, Obed West, on a trip to the Clarence River district and was so impressed with the richness of the area that he determined to bring his family and settle in the district. The property purchased by Wilcox was called Dallinga and was on the south side of the river in Grafton. By the time that MacGillivray arrived in July 1864, Wilcox was a prominent and respected figure in the Grafton district.

One of Wilcox's daughters, Edith Bloore (nee Wilcox) has written of her memories of life at Dallinga.[67] Her reminiscences conjure up a large, close and loving family with an overriding interest in nature and the environment. Her memories revolve around the beautiful garden that surrounded the house. Wilcox was in contact with Ferdinand Von Mueller, Curator of the Botanic Gardens in Melbourne and Charles Moore, Curator of the Botanic Gardens in Sydney. Both men sent Wilcox seeds and plants for his garden in exchange for specimens sent from the Richmond River district.

Dallinga's rambling garden was filled with wisteria, camellias, jacarandas, magnolias, mandarin trees, rice paper trees, a monkey pine, a Brazilian walnut and an old cork oak with seats around the base.[68] Wilcox had a particular fondness for an enormous Moreton Bay Fig down at the bottom of the garden so much so that he had an acre of land fenced off surrounding it to protect its roots. MacGillivray referred to it as 'Wilcox's pride'.[69]

Scientific visitors were frequently entertained at Dallinga. On one occasion a Mr Steinman and Mr Karn from Germany and Hungary respectively stayed at the house while they searched for a complete skeleton of an 'Australian aboriginal' (for which, Bloore states, they had a permit).[70] After some time they successfully procured a satisfactory specimen which was locked away in Wilcox's work-room away from the main house. Bloore recalled that:

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[67] Edith Lindsay Bloore, *Dallinga – Reminiscences of an Australian home 1852 to 1896*, Donated to the Grafton Historical Society by Barry and Graham Bloore.

[68] Bloore recalls that her mother was a keen gardener. Her manuscript records that 'An old black gin wandered into the garden one day when Mother was working amongst the ferns and she exclaimed "by gull misses – garden all-s-same a scrub". Mother always said that was the nicest compliment she had ever had paid about the garden as they had always tried to copy nature as far as possible'. Bloore, *Dallinga.*

[69] MacGillivray to Ramsay, 19 August 1865, E.P. Ramsay - papers, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, MLMSS 563/3, microfilm CY2321. Interestingly this letter is not included in Iredale's 'Last letters'.

[70] This may have been a profitable sideline for Wilcox – Paul Turnbull, 'British Anthropological Thought in Colonial Practice: the appropriation of Indigenous Australian bodies, 1860-1880' in Bronwyn Douglas and Chris Ballard (eds), *Foreign Bodies: Oceania and the Science of Race 1750-1940* (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2008),

> Ellen, our native girl, always inquisitive, thought she would have a peep – she picked up the skull and ran to show it to a neighbour and of course frightened six months growth out of them. In returning it she dropped a tooth – when the men resumed they were dancing with rage and threatened to skin her alive and take her skeleton. (She kept out of the way for a few days).[71]

Other visitors to Dallinga included Krefft from the Australian Museum, William Carron,[72] the explorer Luigi Maria D'Albertis[73] and the conchologist John Brazier.[74]

It was into this haven that MacGillivray stepped in 1864. On 2 July Wilcox wrote to Krefft regarding the purchase of a number of specimens. In the letter he announced that 'my old ship mate MacGillivray is here I was so glad to see him and shall feel much pleasure in making him happy during his stay with us.'[75] The visit was to be of much longer duration than either perhaps originally intended. Just over a month after MacGillivray's arrival on 9 August 1864 the two men entered into a partnership. This relationship would last two years before ending in bitterness and distrust.

The main source for this period regarding the collecting activities of Wilcox and MacGillivray is a series of letters written by MacGillivray to Dr Edward Pierson Ramsay. E.P. Ramsay would eventually become one of Australia's best-known zoologists and curator of the Australian Museum (from 1874-1894). At the stage of the Ramsay/MacGillivray correspondence Ramsay was a rising star in Sydney's scientific circles. Born in 1842 he was just 23 years old in 1865. That year he discontinued his medical studies at the University of Sydney and dedicated himself to a career in natural history – a path he was able to pursue thanks to his inheritance in 1862 of his portion of

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Turnbull states that: 'On being approached by Huxley in 1866, Krefft provided him with basic cranial measurements of the Museum's collection and promised to help him secure skulls through James Wilcox (1823–1881), a farmer in the Grafton district of New South Wales who for some years had supplemented his income by selling bird and marsupial specimens to the Australian Museum and the Museum of Victoria. Wilcox was also known to be willing to plunder Aboriginal graves.' http://epress.anu.edu.au/foreign_bodies/mobile_devices/ch04s02.html#ftn.d0e8240 (accessed 2 August 2010).

[71] Bloore, *Dallinga*.

[72] Carron was the botanist on the Kennedy expedition. His statement is included in the *Narrative of the Rattlesnake.*

[73] Wilcox's son Clarrie accompanied D'Albertis on an expedition up the Fly river in 1879.

[74] *Grafton Argus*, 1893. Included within Bloore's statement. Interestingly – it was John Brazier who first stirred Tom Iredale's interest in John MacGillivray. He worked at the Australian Museum. In his 'Last letters' article Iredale recalled that: 'Mr John Brazier, the old-time Conchologist, told me about MacGillivray, contradicting some of the traditional tale, but I had no proof to substantiate Brazier's account'.

[75] Wilcox to Krefft, 21 July 1864, Australian Museum Archives, c:40:64.

the Dobroyd estate[76]. Ramsay was young, enthusiastic and very well connected. He corresponded with Governor Denison on conchological matters, was considered a protégée of the Macleay family and was also in contact with John Gould and Richard Owen. He was the founding treasurer of the Entomological society of New South Wales in 1862 and in 1865 was elected to Sydney's Philosophical Society.

It is unclear when MacGillivray and Ramsay first became acquainted. The Ramsay papers covering period of July 1865 until 1867 provide a picture of the partnership between Wilcox and MacGillivray as well as giving an indication of the manner in which the two men conducted their business. The correspondence provides a glimpse into the extensive contacts that the naturalists had established as well as illustrating the type of life that a collector led in Australia in the 1860s. Ultimately Ramsay would play a major role in the rift that would develop between Wilcox and MacGillivray but no hint of this was present at the outset of their operations together. Tom Iredale, examining the later career of MacGillivray, has published extracts from MacGillivray's letters to Ramsay.[77] Iredale however, omits a number of crucial paragraphs in certain letters that shed considerable light on the relationship between Wilcox and MacGillivray and, in particular, the details of their eventual falling out.

Wilcox and MacGillivray had both established an excellent range of contacts with collectors, museums and other private dealers. MacGillivray's letters show that their business was selling material to Krefft at the Australian Museum, Frederick MacCoy at the National Museum of Melbourne, Waterhouse at the South Australian Museum and private collectors in Australia and Europe. The business operated from Wilcox's residence, Dallinga. During the partnership MacGillivray also lived at the property. The two men would undertake frequent collecting trips in the surrounding country collecting material specifically requested by their many correspondents, as well as building up their stores of natural history specimens for general sale.

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[76] The Dobroyd estate consisted of approximately 480 acres which included all the land from north of Parramatta Road between Iron Cove and Long Cove creeks. Purchased in 1805 by Simon Lord the estate was settled on Lord's daughter Sarah on her marriage to Mr David Ramsay. The land was divided between ten Ramsay children on David Ramsay's death. The suburb of Haberfield was created when the shares of three of the Ramsay children's shares were purchased in the 1880s. See the *Ashfield Municipal Council Development Control Plan, 2007 – Haberfield Conservation Area Part C7.*

[77] Tom Iredale, 'The last letters of John MacGillivray', *Australian Zoologist,* 9 (1937): 40-63.

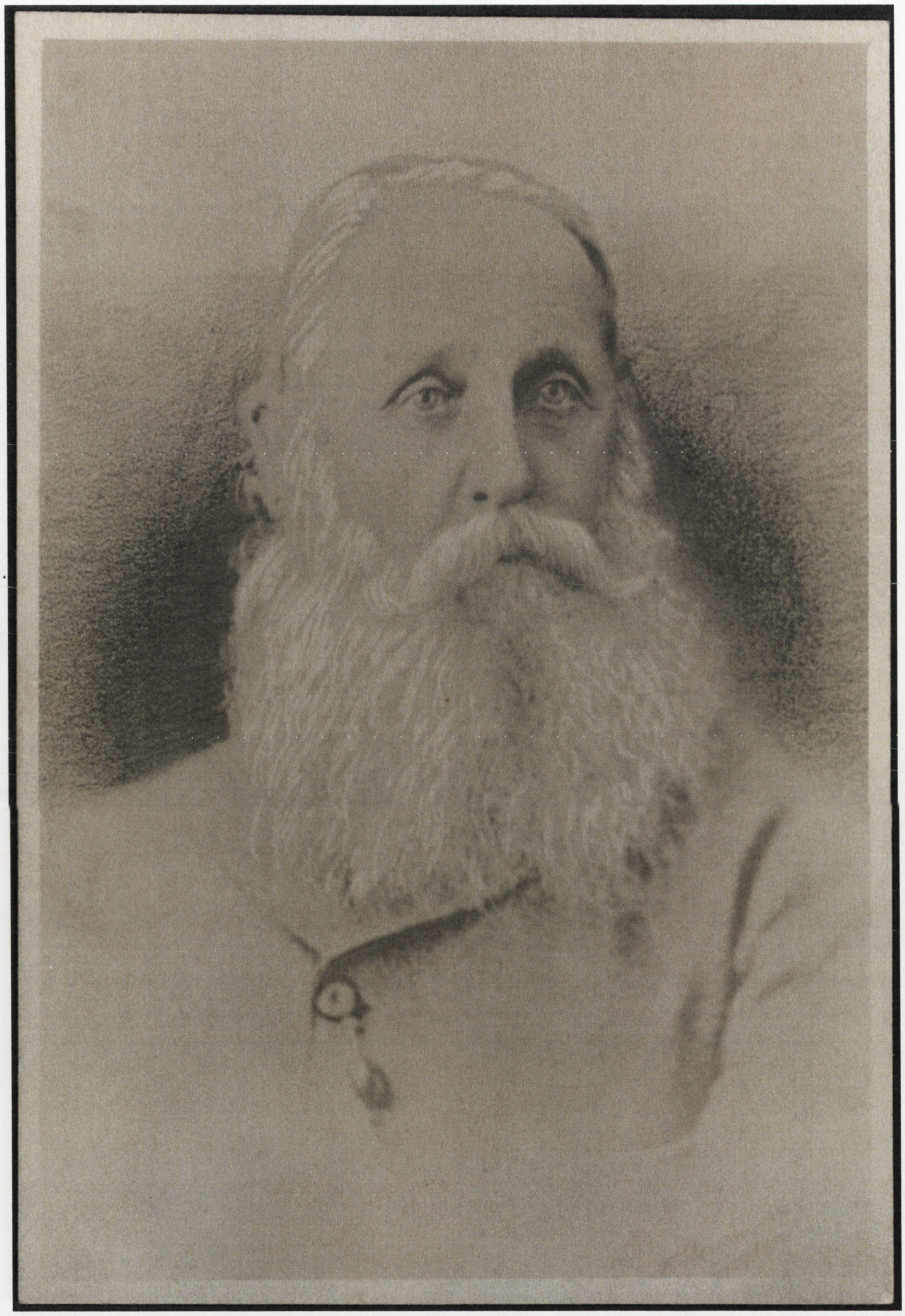

Plate 26: James Fowler Wilcox
One of MacGillivray's shipmates on board the *Rattlesnake* and later business partner in Grafton 1864-1866.
(National Library of Australia)

The first letter to Ramsay contains perhaps the most vivid account of a successful hunting trip conducted by the pair. In June 1865 they set off inland with a kangaroo dog, Wilcox driving a light dray and MacGillivray riding. Several days later the pair were joined by around six Aboriginal men 'without whose assistance we should not have succeeded' wrote MacGillivray.[78] The aim of the expedition, according to MacGillivray, was to 'make a collection of fine skins and skulls [of kangaroos] of as many sorts as could be procured at one time, and we persevered until we did so'.[79] What followed was a fortnight of carnage for the macropod inhabitants of the Clarence district. On the first day alone six specimens were secured - an Eastern Grey, and two of what MacGillivray called 'Grey Faces' (*Osphranter parryi the* Whiptail Wallaby now known as *Macropus parryi),* and two of what he termed Grey wallabies (*Halmaturus ruficollis* the Red-necked Wallaby now known as *Macropus rufogriseus*). MacGillivray stayed in camp the following day to carry out the skinning while Wilcox went in search of further specimens. MacGillivray informed Ramsay that he no longer cared so much for shooting, whereas Wilcox was still enthusiastic – particularly in this style of hunt. Despite his disavowal MacGillivray describes his own shooting prowess with considerable pride:

> One evening at dusk when some of the blacks were approaching the camp from the rocks above one of them raised the usual noise to alarm and distract the attention of some animal. So throwing down my skin I rushed to the tent for my gun and just as a wallaroo which had slipped down a rocky gully and on emerging was crossing a ridge going from me at full speed. I fired hastily but not the less correctly, as on going up to look if there was any blood I found the beast itself lying on the very spot still breathing but done for. The distance was found to be 75 yards – a long shot for a No. 2 shot cartridge to *kill* an animal as heavy as a sheep. So you see, the wallaroo even came to me.[80]

With further boasts of success in a similar vein the following day:

> I managed to catch a wallaroo asleep – about as difficult I imagine as in the case of a weasel – and whistling roused her to meet her fate. Within an hour afterwards I suddenly started 2 fine big ones – like the first – (for curiously enough we saw not one young or half-grown wallaroos – all were adult or nearly so). They had been basking in a secluded hollow near a dead tree amid blocks of stone and grass trees and low bushes in a place where they had the full benefit of the morning sun. So I pitched into them, right and left, and if there had been a third I believe I would

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[78] MacGillivray to Ramsay, 4 July 1865, E.P. Ramsay - papers, being mainly correspondence relating to natural history, 1860-1912, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, MLMSS 563/3, microfilm CY2321.

[79] *Ibid*

[80] *Ibid*

> have killed it also with my third or rifle barrel, because snap shooting is that in which I feel most confidence in myself.[81]

His pleasure continued as he described a 'grand opossum hunt' that involved a 'splendid run with the dog' as they made their way home. MacGillivray went into similar detail regarding his magnificent shooting ability in a letter to his sister and brother-in-law, then living in New Zealand. The final tally of game killed was 41 or 42.[82] The *Clarence and Richmond Rivers Examiner* contained a detailed account of the trip titled 'Among the Kangaroos'; the reporter visited Dallinga to view 19 stuffed specimens from the trip lined up along the verandah.[83] The article attracted many visitors out from Grafton to view the spectacle. The account tallies so closely in parts with MacGillivray's letter to Ramsay that it is clear that he spun the yarn out for the reporter as they stood on the verandah inspecting the spoils of their expedition. MacGillivray was obviously thrilled with the results:

> I do not believe that any skins of mammalia got cleaned in the bush and, of course, much knocked about ever surpassed them – in fineness of fur (it being winter time) – in carefulness of preparation – even the feet being skinned and sewn up – and in the filling *naturally* and finishing off. And *now* that all has been accomplished in a manner perfectly satisfactory to W. and myself, I feel pretty sure that ere long we shall have another go in for these creatures – skeletons chiefly this time.[84]

MacGillivray and Wilcox were quick to capitalise on the sudden expansion in colonial museums and were ideally placed to supply the growing needs of these infant institutions. The Australian and National Museum of Victoria were already good customers, and soon they were joined by the South Australian Institute. In 1853 South Australia's newly established Philosophical Society lobbied for the establishment of the South Australian Institute, which they successfully established in 1856. The Institute's first curator was Frederick George Waterhouse.[85] Some of the specimens from Wilcox and MacGillivray's adventure 'Among the Kangaroos' were to go to Melbourne Museum. MacGillivray asked if Ramsay were corresponding with Waterhouse to let him know that they would be able to supply him with specimens if they were required. Ramsay did as he was asked and MacGillivray and Wilcox soon had another key institution to supply.

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[81] *Ibid*

[82] MacGillivray's letter to Ramsay lists 42, the *Clarence and Richmond Rivers Examiner* lists 41.

[83] 'Among the Kangaroos', *Clarence and Richmond Rivers Examiner,* 25 July 1865, 2.

[84] MacGillivray to Ramsay, 4 July 1865, E.P. Ramsay - papers, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, MLMSS 563/3, microfilm CY2321.

[85] Waterhouse himself was an accomplished naturalist. In 1861-1863 he accompanied John MacDonald Sturt on his expedition across the continent to northern Australia and successfully collected the first specimens of the Princess Alexandra Parrot. See Darrell N. Kraehenbuehl, 'Waterhouse, Frederick George (1815 - 1898)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography Online*, http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A060383b.htm?hilite=waterhouse (accessed 2 August, 2010).
The South Australian Institute requested donations of material from companies and individuals and the collection quickly grew. A building to house exhibitions of material for the public was opened in 1862. Waterhouse set about an energetic collecting program including a vigorous exchange program with overseas institutions. This program saw many Australian specimens disappear in exchange for exotic specimens, a practice that Waterhouse would later be criticised for. See H.M. Hale, 'The First Hundred Years of the South Australian Museum, 1856–1956', *Records of the South Australian Museum,* 12, 1 (1956): 225.

Wilcox and MacGillivray combined opportunistic collecting with filling orders. Their connections with the Australian collecting institutions and major private collectors meant that they had an excellent knowledge of what would sell, what would fill gaps in collections and the best places to be marketing their finds. Professor MacCoy at the Melbourne Museum was a frequent, if tardy, correspondent and customer. As well as the stuffed mammilian specimens he purchased he was also supplied with skulls, birds and insects.

Private collectors included Ramsay himself. MacGillivray was supplying Ramsay with large collections of skins and sterna throughout this period. These transactions make up the greater part of the correspondence between MacGillivray and Ramsay. Another regular customer was Francoise Louise de la Porte, the French Consul in Melbourne. Other notable Sydney customers were Dr James Cox, the conchologist and William Macleay – both trustees at the Australian Museum. Macleay obviously felt that MacGillivray's specimens were worth procuring despite any personal dislike that might have lingered from earlier encounters. MacGillivray also mentioned that they were busy preparing lyrebirds at the request of the Paris Exhibition Commissioners. In one letter MacGillivray describes a local squatter who visited to purchase from their collection. He wrote:

> I was much amused the day before yesterday to see a very knowing man – as he thought himself (a squatter selecting a collection for Europe) deliberately prefer a common snipe to a painted one. Of course I was very glad. He was however a better judge of flat skins – kangaroo and opossum – of which he took all we had, after carefully examining them one by one and being foiled in his attempts to pull off the hair.[86]

Despite the success of the business, one year into the partnership MacGillivray was openly expressing his doubts about the future. To Ramsay he commented:

> On this day last year (August 9th) I entered into an agreement with Wilcox which I have acted upon for one year. I am not satisfied with the result and when we square up it is not likely that I shall remain here …[87]

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[86] MacGillivray to Ramsey, 19 August 1865, E.P. Ramsay - papers, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, MLMSS 563/3, microfilm CY2321.
[87] *Ibid*

Whatever troubles were bothering MacGillivray were obviously smoothed over as the pair continued their partnership for a further year. On 19 August he wrote:

> I got rid of all my bats last Monday having sent them and all our small mammalia and such of the kangaroos as MacCoy had written for to Melbourne Museum... Now that we have direct steam communication with Melbourne by "Urara" Wilcox is going there next trip or the following one with most of our things. It will be quite a pleasure to me to see again the bare walls and empty drawers as when I began. My year having expired we now start a fresh.[88]

Despite all these contacts business was often slow. MacGillivray commented to his brother-in-law that it is 'by no means a money making game'.[89]

Living with the Wilcox family would have provided a stark contrast for MacGillivray both to the life that he had been living during his wanderings and to his current personal situation. Wilcox presented a picture of domestic harmony, settled, with a happy marriage and a house full of children. In one letter to Ramsay MacGillivray wrote that he occasionally strolled out in the moonlight with his gun 'after the seven children are asleep and gathering fresh strength for the morning's chaos'.[90]

Despite lacking family of his own, Grafton obviously satisfied MacGillivray in a way in which his other recent abodes had failed. His letters demonstrate a real enjoyment in participating in local affairs and being a seen as a figure of importance within a community. Several mentions are made of friends made in the local area. One friend was the local police magistrate, Captain Hill. MacGillivray wrote that he was:

> ...a great sportsman, and to be hanged to him, for I have not yet forgiven him for causing me to ride 30 miles the other afternoon in 3½ hours in his anxiety to be at a friend's station in time for dinner. I didn't feel very lively next day, although I had got a fine bat (Rhin Megaph.) in the room during said dinner and during said ride the dogs caught a kangaroo rat of a kind I had never seen before – Bett. grayi. Of course, I skinned it. ...[91]

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[88] *Ibid*

[89] Beaton, 'A Martyr to Science', 429.

[90] MacGillivray to Ramsey, 19 August 1865, E.P. Ramsay - papers, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, MLMSS 563/3, microfilm CY2321.

[91] MacGillivray to Ramsey, 7 May 1866, E.P. Ramsay - papers, being mainly correspondence relating to natural history, 1860-1912, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, MLMSS 563/3, microfilm CY2321.

Clearly the excursion had been a pleasurable one for MacGillivray. He also noted that 'to me – better than all – the sleeping out stopped my cough!'[92] This is one of the first mentions made by MacGillivray of what was to become a serious health issue. During his stay in Grafton he developed severe breathing difficulties exacerbated by a series of colds from which he had difficulty recovering.

The scene at the dinner table described above, as the noted adventurer and naturalist secured a bat, is a vivid one. As a newcomer recently resident in exotic locations MacGillivray appears to have had the glamour of minor celebrity – a status that he obviously enjoyed and cultivated during his time in Grafton. Nowhere is this clearer than in the obvious pleasure that MacGillivray derived from delivering a series of lectures at the Grafton School of Arts. The first of these lectures on 'Natural History' took place on 7 April 1865. It received a rave review in the local press:

> The hall was filled. Such a lecture as this, so rich in illustration of all kinds, so full of information, so well digested, has rarely been heard in Grafton. ...The lecturer commenced by vindicating the study from the contempt sometimes bestowed on it. He defined it in its wider and more restricted senses, accompanying every part of his address with unexpected anecdotes, and strokes of sly humour as irresistible as unexpected.[93]

The large audience (two thirds of them women according to MacGillivray)[94] sat spellbound as MacGillivray set about explaining the science behind his profession. All of the divisions and orders were explored and explained – families, genera, species and sub-species. After two hours there was still so much to be said that it was decided to conclude the lecture in a fortnight's time. The newspaper urged all that had not attended the first to ensure that they made it to the second in this 'valuable' series. When the second lecture, delivered on 21 April, concluded the paper stated that it was '...one of the most valuable and interesting lectures ever delivered in Grafton, or, perhaps, in any part of the colony.'[95]

On 12 May 1865 MacGillivray gave another lecture, this time solely concentrating on birds, the treating of which, the reporter commented, 'Mr McGillivray [sic] seemed peculiarly happy'.[96] At the conclusion of the lecture the chairman moved a vote of thanks and requested that another lecture would be provided if possible. MacGillivray promised that if time allowed he would indeed lecture again. The news was received with applause.

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[92] *Ibid*

[93] *Clarence and Richmond Rivers Examiner,* 11 April 1865, 2.

[94] Beaton, 'A Martyr to Science', 428.

[95] 'School of Arts – Mr McGillivray's [sic] Lecture', *Clarence and Richmond Rivers Examiner,* 25 April 1865, 2.

[96] 'Lecture at the School of Arts', *Clarence and Richmond Rivers Examiner,* 16 May 1865, 2.

MacGillivray gave at least three lectures the following year on the South Sea Islands (in two parts one of which concentrated on Missionary life) and the Coral Reefs of Australia.[97]

Further evidence of MacGillivray's standing in the community relates to his involvement in organising the Clarence and Richmond Rivers district submission to the 1866 Intercolonial Exhibition in Melbourne. Melbourne had already hosted two major exhibitions in 1854 and 1861. Both were preludes to international exhibitions – the 1855 Paris Exposition Universelle and the 1862 London International Exhibition. The 1866 Intercolonial Exhibition was held prior to the Paris Exposition Universelle, which was held the following year. The exhibition of 1866 was of particular significance as it marked the first occasion in which all of the colonies were represented at an Australian exhibition. This fact has made it the subject of valuable analysis regarding the way in which such events can be seen to have played a part in the construction of an Australian national identity.[98]

The organisers of the Intercolonial Exhibition had high hopes that it would help to unite the colonies in the spirit of 'friendly rivalry' and provide a basis for the promotion of general interests of all the participants.[99] The Grafton committee members were interested in using the exhibition as a way of showcasing the products and potential of their region. Wilcox and MacGillivray were keen to demonstrate their own produce and skill and were permitted, as were all other exhibitors, to attach a price tag to their displays, which made it both a useful, and potentially profitable, exercise.[100]

It was largely left to the individual regions to fund their participation in the Exhibition. When Grafton's Mayor, Thomas Bawden, received notice of the Exhibition in December 1865 he responded enthusiastically to the opportunity it presented. A public meeting was held at the Grafton School of Arts on 21 February 1866 in order to consider how best to organise a comprehensive representation of the district.

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[97] Lectures delivered on 2 March, 23 March and 14 September. The popularity of MacGillivray's lectures is perhaps less of a surprise when examining the other lectures delivered to the society in 1866 which included Dr Kelly, on 'The Present Physical Position and Prospects of Man', Mr W. Matthews, on 'Waste products and Undeveloped Substances' and Mr J.L. Michael, on 'The Microscope', *Clarence and Richmond Rivers Examiner*, 29 October 1866, 2.

[98] See Emily Harris, 'Race and Australian national identity at the 1866-67 Intercolonial Exhibition', in Kate Darian-Smith, Richard Gillespie, Caroline Jordan and Elizabeth Willis (eds), *Seize the Day: Exhibitions, Australia and the World* (Melbourne: Monash University ePress. 2008), 3.1-3.16.

[99] *Guide to the Intercolonial Exhibition of 1866, opened at Melbourne October 24, with preface by J.G. Knight* (Melbourne : Blundell & Ford, 1866), vi.

[100] The Guidelines of the Rules and Regulations for guidance of intending exhibitors stated that 'prices may be affixed to the articles exhibited'.

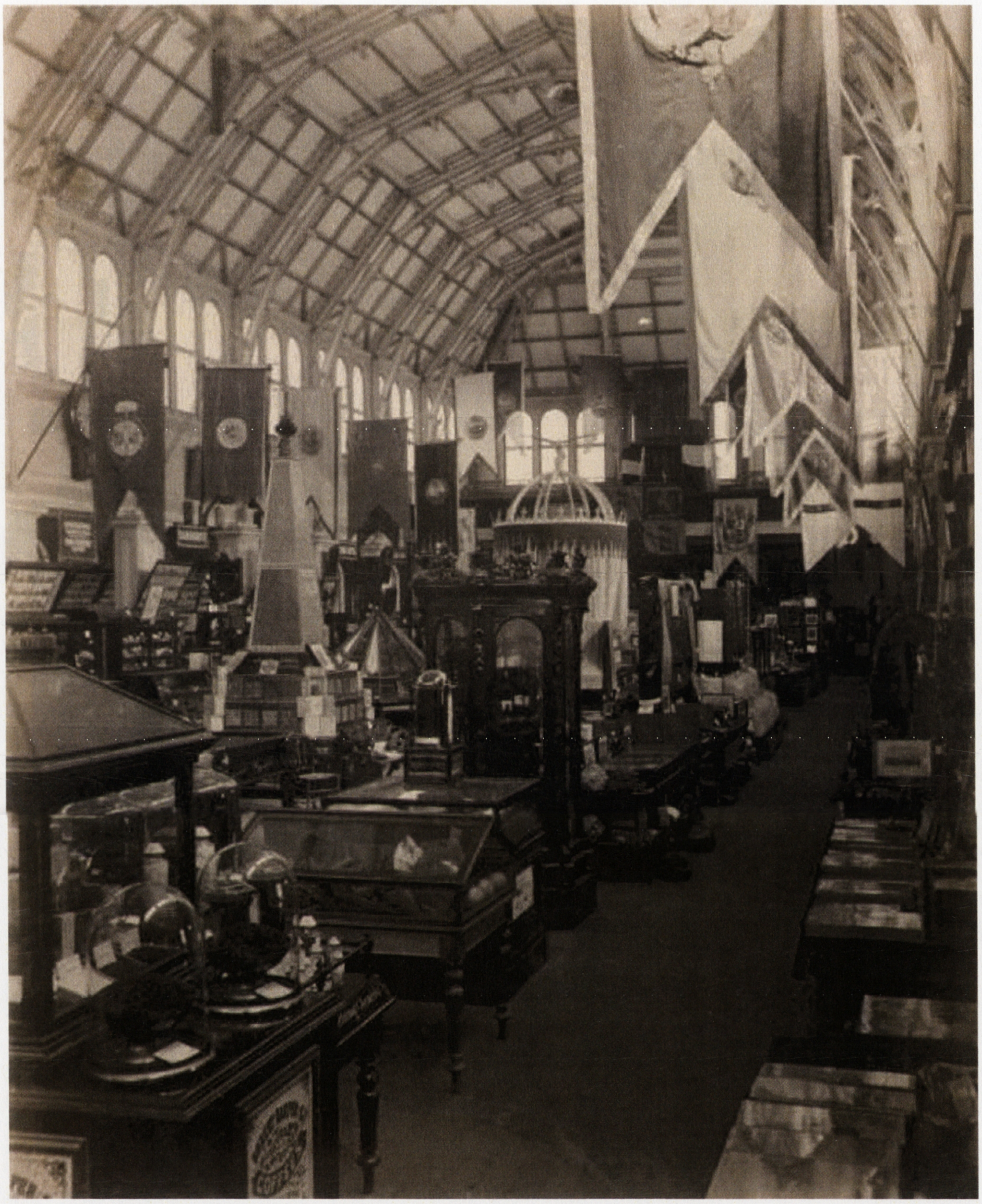
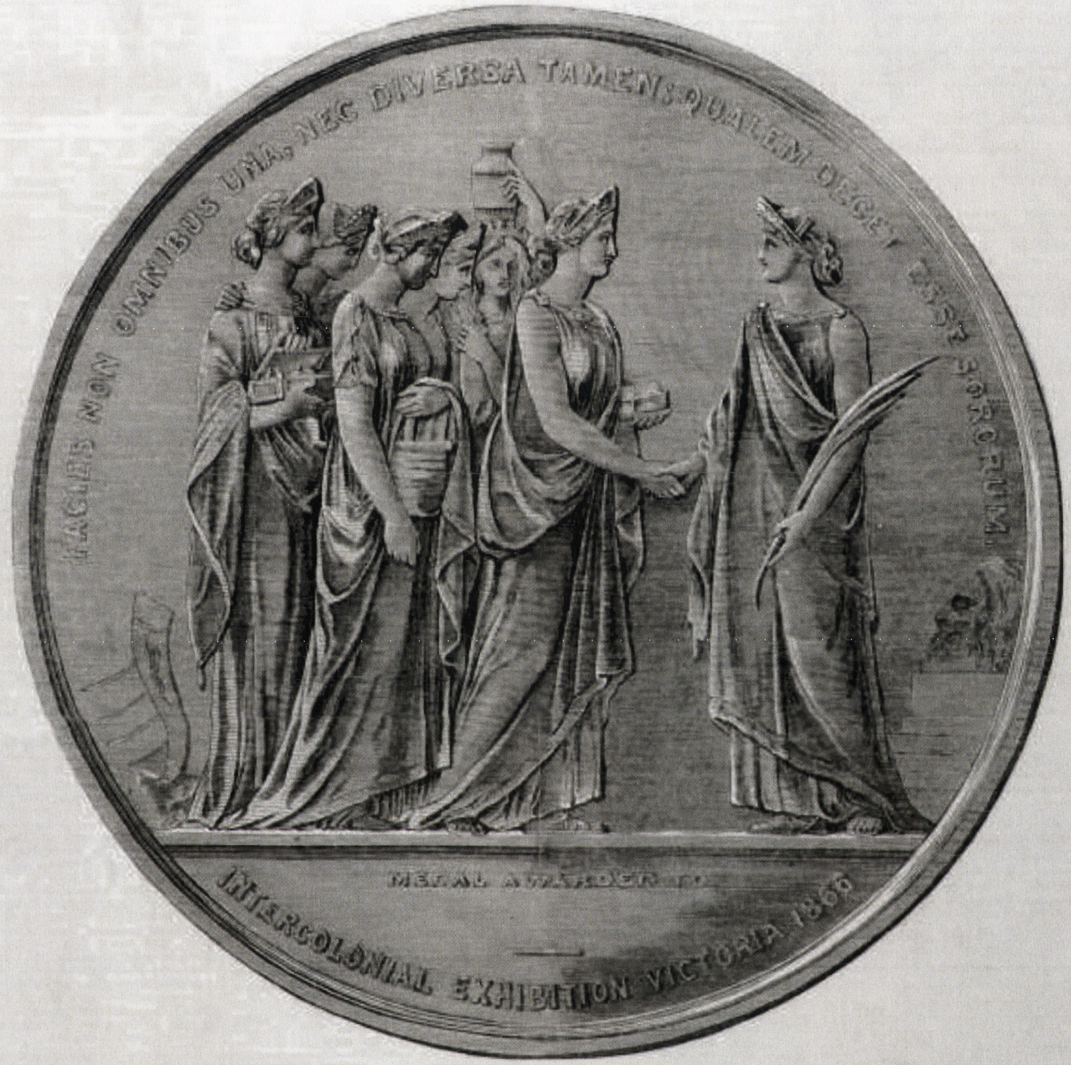


Plate 27: View of the interior of the Exhibition Building at the Australian Intercolonial Exhibition, Melbourne, 1866-7
(Thomas Ellis & Co, picture. Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria)


FACIES NON OMNIBUS UNA, NEC DIVERSA TAMEN; QUALEM DECET ESSE SORORUM.
MEDAL AWARDED TO
INTERCOLONIAL EXHIBITION VICTORIA 1866

INTERCOLONIAL EXHIBITION MEDAL, VICTORIA, 1866.—Designed and Modelled by C. Summers.—See page 3.

Plate 28: The Intercolonial Exhibition Medal
The medal was designed by Charles Summers and represents Victoria receiving her "six sisters".
(Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria)

Although MacGillivray was forced to send his apologies to the meeting his name was suggested, either individually or in partnership with Wilcox, as being the ideal person to superintend the classification and preparation of the exhibits.[101] A committee of eminent men from the district was elected to oversee preparations for the exhibition. MacGillivray and Wilcox were both elected as members. Meetings were held in the School of Arts building each Friday night and MacGillivray's comments throughout these demonstrate that he took his role as a committee member seriously. The committee members had a battle convincing local residents to contribute produce for the exercise. Numerous mentions were made during the meetings regarding the apathy of a number of the local producers. The committee had to work hard to convince people of the worth of the endeavour and the possible benefits that would flow from their participation.[102]

The organisers of the Intercolonial Exhibition suggested that a display of the exhibits held locally prior to the despatch of the material to Melbourne was one method that might prove useful to help defray expenses incurred by the regional authorities. The Grafton committee agreed – on the 24 May 1866 the display of the Clarence and Richmond River exhibits opened at the School of Arts. The *Clarence and Richmond Rivers Examiner* gave a detailed account of the exhibition and noted the 'noble' contribution made by Wilcox and MacGillivray which took up the entire centre and upper end of the hall.[103] The centrepiece of this was a river cod measuring no less than four feet and estimated to have weighed over 50lbs when caught. The local exhibition closed on 29 May having attracted 640 visitors (120 of whom were school children).[104]

MacGillivray delivered the exhibition's closing address, which was reported at length in the *Clarence and Richmond Rivers Examiner*. In his closing remarks MacGillivray took the opportunity to comment on the worth of exhibitions as a means to advertise the produce of the district and encouraged further donations, particularly of a financial nature, to be made. The paper stated that Mr MacGillivray has:

> ...seldom spoken in Grafton with greater energy, effect and precision than on this occasion. ... A more respectable gathering has not for a long time been seen in our town than were present, including almost all the principal inhabitants with their families, who, we believe, left well satisfied with the lecturer, and with the result of the efforts made by the committee, looking at the short time, the small means, and

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[101] 'Intercolonial Exhibition', *Clarence and Richmond Rivers Examiner*, 27 February 1866, 2.

[102] 'The Intercolonial Exhibition', *Clarence and Richmond Rivers Examiner*, 20 March 1866, 2.

[103] 'Intercolonial Exhibition at Melbourne', *Clarence and Richmond Rivers Examiner*, 29 May 1866, 2.

[104] 'Closing of the Intercolonial Exhibition', *Clarence and Richmond Rivers Examiner*, 5 June 1866, 2.

> the limited numbers of those to whose perseverance that result is mainly to be attributed.[105]

To Ramsay, MacGillivray complained of the heavy workload that the Intercolonial Exhibition had placed on them and stated that their own business had suffered materially as a consequence. He stated that he had had the 'lion's share' of the work in preparing the local exhibition including the extensive description written for the local paper.[106]

The amount of material contributed by Wilcox and MacGillivray was impressive. Their joint contribution to the Animal Products section consisted of 17 stuffed mammalia skins of 12 species, 150 stuffed birds of 135 species, 127 bird skulls of different species, a stuffed specimen of the lace lizard, a stuffed specimen of the fresh water tortoise, a stuffed specimen of coe perch or Murray River cod (on a red cedar stand), two cases of insects (the cases made of silky oak), a specimen of mangrove crab (on a stand of bean-tree and a collection of land shells (in a box made of white pine). As well as this each man made his own separate contributions. MacGillivray is listed as having exhibited two opossum skins. Wilcox is listed as having shown quills of the wild goose. In the Agricultural, Horticultural and Indigenous Vegetable Products class Wilcox and MacGillivray contributed a collection of ferns of the Clarence and Richmond district. Mrs Mary Wilcox was one of the Grafton women who contributed to the exhibition of local produce with a hat of corn husks, two bottles of catsup, swans down and quills.[107] Wilcox also contributed an aboriginal stone hatchet, 'turned up by the Plough; formerly used by Aborigines of the District'.[108]

The efforts of the Grafton community did not go unnoticed by the organisers of the Intercolonial Exhibition. In the official guide to the exhibition they were singled out for special mention. The guide wrote glowingly:

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[105] *Ibid*

[106] MacGillivray to Ramsey, 3 June 1866, E.P. Ramsay - papers, being mainly correspondence relating to natural history, 1860-1912, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, MLMSS 563/3, microfilm CY2321.

[107] Corn husks in the fabrics in silk, wool, cotton, hair, flax, hemp, thread, straw, pun, woven, felted or Loaid – Plain or Mixed section. Catsup in the Wines, Perry, Cider, Ale, Porter, Psirrtis, Liquers; fruits, dried or preserved; pickles, sauces, vinegar, pyroligneous Acid, potash, soda, essential and prepared Oils and their cakes, perfumery, models of fruits and vegetables. Quills in the in the animal produce – *Guide to the Intercolonial Exhibition of 1866,* Description of New South Wales Court, 60-72.

[108] In her analysis of Race at the Intercolonial exhibition Emily Harris, appears to be unaware of Wilcox's profession. She classifies Wilcox as a settler turned amateur ethnographer based on this item and a donation in 1865 of two sets of human remains to the National Museum of Melbourne. See Harris, Emily. 2008. 'Race and Australian national identity at the 1866-67 Intercolonial Exhibition' in Darian-Smith, Gillespie, Jordan and Willis (eds), *Seize the Day*, 03.09.

> The show made by the Northern or Clarence River district of New South Wales is not the least remarkable feature of the Exhibition. …The zoology of the district is admirably illustrated in a most complete collection of birds, beasts, and fishes, skeletons and skulls, industriously gathered and forwarded for exhibition by Mr. J.F. Wilcox and Mr. J. McGillivray [sic]. No other part of Australia is in this respect so well represented.[109]

For their efforts Wilcox and MacGillivray were awarded one of the Intercolonial exhibition medals. Professor McCoy was the chairman of the Natural History class and in his report he singled out their contribution as 'by far the most instructive and complete local collection of mammalia and birds'.[110]

MacGillivray's stay in Grafton is a fascinating part of his colonial career. What he had been unable to secure in the metropolis of Sydney he could attain in the smaller setting of this rapidly growing town. In Grafton MacGillivray was a person of standing. He was respected and listened to. His lectures were well attended and his views were sought. He participated in local affairs as a gentleman whose, perhaps carefully edited, past was seen as one of adventure and experience rather than misfortune. MacGillivray's letters from Grafton exude the pleasure that this status affords him. His writings have a lightness and playfulness that further demonstrate his contentedness. It was not to last.

At a meeting of the Grafton Intercolonial exhibition committee on 13 July it had been agreed that it would be worthwhile to send a commissioner to Melbourne to represent the region and its exhibits. Wilcox was selected and £25 was set aside to cover his expenses. MacGillivray was one of those present that supported this selection. It is difficult to tell if he hoped that the committee would recommend him for the position. However, in the period during which the exhibition had been organised, other events had intervened which were occupying MacGillivray's thoughts. The partnership with Wilcox was in tatters and he was busy planning where his next move would take him.

The events that led to the dispute between Wilcox and MacGillivray began in September 1865 when the pair had set out on another large scale collecting expedition. This time they headed toward Lismore passing through Casino. They took a light cart, horses and an Aboriginal man as an assistant. Once camp was established they expected to make longer trips around the district. MacGillivray wrote that he was unsure of what they would obtain on the trip. He joked with Ramsay that:

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[109] *Intercolonial Exhibition of Australasia, Melbourne 1866-67: official record containing introduction catalogues, reports and awards of the jurors and essays and statistics on the social and economic resources of the Australasian colonies* (Melbourne : Published by authority of the Commissioners, 1867), 145.

[110] *Intercolonial Exhibition of Australasia, Melbourne 1866-67: official record,* 201.

> …if everything else fails we might do a little business in the bushranging way, for we are not known there and will be provided with good horses and first-rate guns.[111]

The trip was a long and arduous one. For MacGillivray it meant three months of sleeping outdoors. Subsequent letters make it clear that MacGillivray's health, seemingly improved since his return from the islands, had taken a turn for the worse.

It was on 17 November that a stocky little reddish brown bird crossed their path. Darting amongst the shadows the elusive creature scurried quickly through the rainforest's deep leaf litter and would occasionally call out – a piercing, powerful and unusual cheeping. Its small body quivered with the effort of its song, its whitish throat held high and its tail fanning out for the performance. Intriguingly, the bird would also mimic the calls of other birds and would throw its voice as if from different directions and locations to the extent that Wilcox 'was almost inclined, (though not superstitious) to think an evil-spirit was playing me a trick'.[112] Two specimens, both male, were secured.

The naturalists returned to Grafton in December. Wilcox and MacGillivray believed that they had captured *Atrichia clamosa*. MacGillivray was, however, in some doubt and wrote to Ramsay that although he believed it to be *clamosa* he would hold off sending the sterna until he was satisfied.[113]

The *Atrichia clamosa* to which MacGillivray referred is now known as *Atrichornis* commonly called a Rufous Scrub-bird. The genus contains two species – one, *clamosa*, from Western Australia and the other, *rufescens* from north-east New South Wales and Queensland[114]. John Gould's collector John Gilbert had discovered the first specimens of *clamosa* in 1842 in Western Australia.[115] Gould described the bird in 1844.

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[111] MacGillivray to Ramsey, 8 September 1865, E.P. Ramsay - papers, being mainly correspondence relating to natural history, 1860-1912, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, MLMSS 563/3, microfilm CY2321.

[112] Wilcox to Ramsay, 3 July 1866, E.P. Ramsay - papers, being mainly correspondence relating to natural history, 1860-1912, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, MLMSS 563/3, microfilm CY2321.

[113] MacGillivray to Ramsay, 10 December 1865, E.P. Ramsay - papers, being mainly correspondence relating to natural history, 1860-1912, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, MLMSS 563/3, microfilm CY2321.

[114] Conservation status in NSW is now listed as vulnerable.

[115] Two specimens – both male – badly damaged.

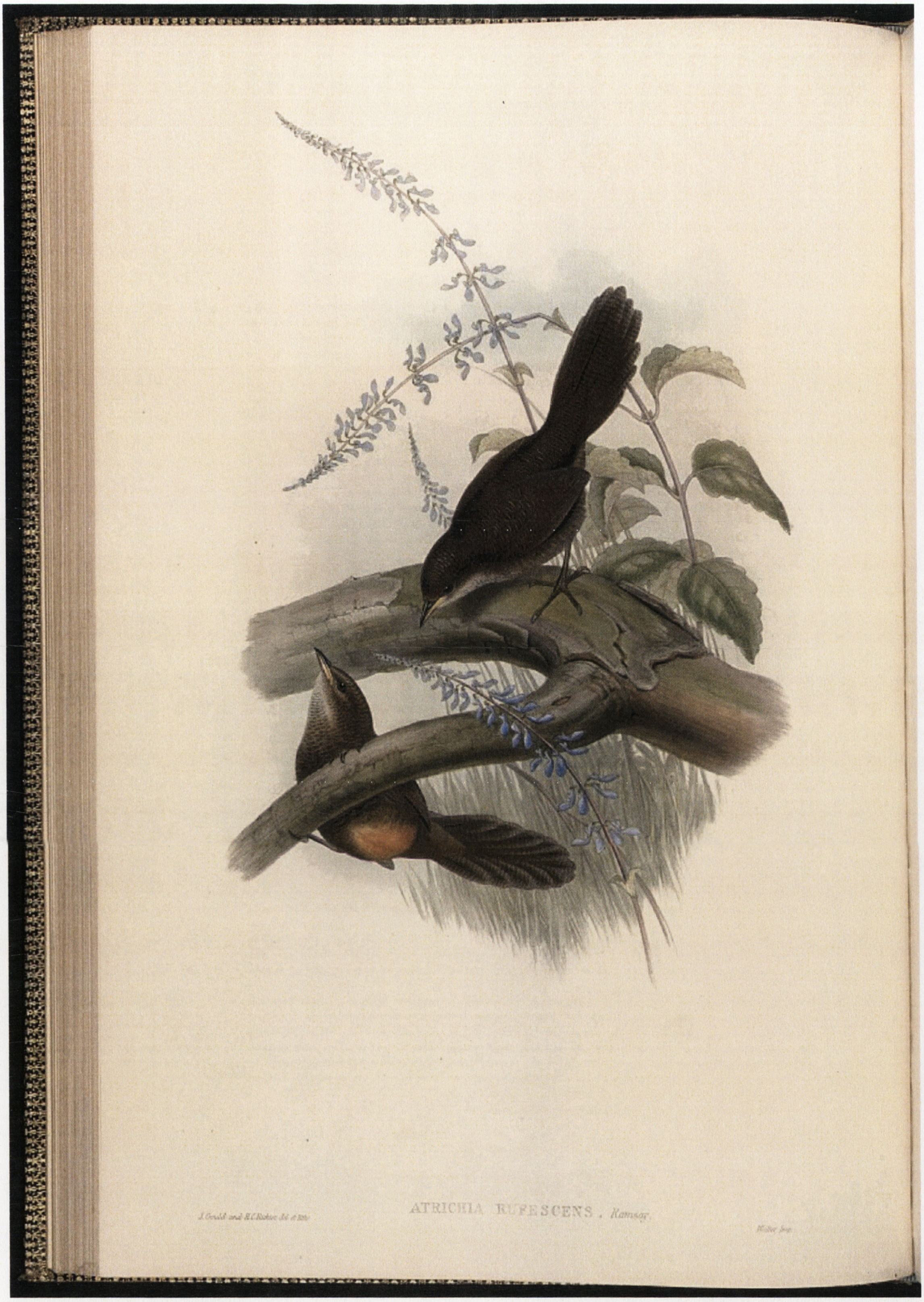
J. Gould and H.C. Richter del et lith.
ATRICHIA RUFESCENS, Ramsay.
Walter Imp.

Plate 29: Rufous Scrub-bird (*Atrichia rufescens*)
Plate from Gould's *The Birds of Australia. Supplement*
(London : Printed by Richard and John E. Taylor, 1848. Supplement published 1869. National Library of Australia)

Wilcox and MacGillivray on their September-December 1865 collecting trip had obtained the first two specimens of *rufescens*. One of these was promised to Waterhouse in South Australia. Ramsay purchased the second specimen for 15/- in May 1866.

Initially Ramsay protested at the high price demanded for the specimen however MacGillivray assured him that if he was not willing to pay that he had a person in Sydney who would be only too willing to do so. Over a number of letters to Ramsay MacGillivray commented on his feeling that this specimen would be found to be different to A. *clamosa.*[116] MacGillivray is noted as the first person to comment on the unusual sternum (a rudimentary furculum or wishbone) peculiar to the species in his letter to Ramsay.[117] On 12 June 1866 Ramsay took the unusual step of describing the species in the *Clarence and Richmond Rivers Examiner* perhaps taking this step in order to get his description into print before Waterhouse in Adelaide.

None of this would be remarkable except for one crucial error made by Ramsay. In the article in the *Examiner* Ramsay named MacGillivray as the discoverer when it was in fact Wilcox who had shot both specimens. MacGillivray had informed Ramsay of this fact in a letter dated 3 June. Whether Ramsay had not received the letter before sending off his description or had simply not realised the implications of his misattribution is unclear. The misattribution might have seemed a small thing to Ramsay but it obviously caused considerable ructions between the Wilcox family and MacGillivray.

When Wilcox read the article he was greatly distressed. He wrote immediately to Ramsay protesting. Ramsay wrote to reassure Wilcox that he would correct his mistake in all future publications. Reassured Wilcox wrote to Ramsay on 3 July stating that:

> Was it not a bird of interest I should have allowed the matter to have passed but in this case I could not for having been engaged for the last 18 years in Ornithological pursuits in various parts of Australia I have never met with or heard of such an extraordinary bird as the one you have just described.[118]

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[116] MacGillivray wrote 'The Richmond bird agrees with Gould's description and a tracing of the figure sent me; still, I cannot help thinking that some differences will yet be found to exist. I am certain that Gould would fine little difficulty in making a species of it.' MacGillivray to Ramsay, 15 April 1866, E.P. Ramsay - papers, being mainly correspondence relating to natural history, 1860-1912, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, MLMSS 563/3, microfilm CY2321.

[117] A.H. Chisholm, 'The story of the scrub-birds', *Emu*, 51, October (1951): 91.

[118] Wilcox to Ramsay, 3 July 1866, E.P. Ramsay - papers, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, MLMSS 563/3, microfilm CY2321.

Wilcox went on to provide his field notes from the collecting trip which Ramsay used in his later description for the Zoological Society in London.[119] The damage the mistake had wrought on the relationship of MacGillivray and Wilcox was much harder to repair. Ramsay's letter to MacGillivray following Wilcox's complaint must have contained some reference to Wilcox being the shooter of the partnership as MacGillivray responded rather tartly that:

> You are mistaken in supposing that "Wilcox does all the interesting part of the business, shoots, etc." It is only during the last 3 weeks in virtue of a special agreement that he has done much bird collecting.[120]

This is from a letter dated 1 July which is the last letter written by MacGillivray to Ramsay from Grafton. The letter is written over a period of three weeks as various interruptions occur and a number of steamers were missed. The last part of the letter is written on 21 July when conflict between MacGillivray and Wilcox had obviously come to a head. In the letter MacGillivray fumed:

> We have not had a boat this year at all, although it was part of the agreement that I should have a boat whenever I required one. However, our agreement has been more honoured in the breach than the observance, and I am delighted to be able to state that now I have a prospect of a speedy settlement and shall be able to follow the bent of my own inclination which will lead me many hundred miles away from the Clarence and to the very best collecting ground in Australia.[121]

He went on to state:

> At our last Committee meeting we agreed to send Wilcox to Melbourne to see the Grafton things placed, etc., and devoted £25 of the fund to defray his expenses. He leaves this on or about September 15, on which day I leave this house never to return for I would not live one day longer than is absolutely necessary under the same roof as an inquisitive prying and unscrupulous woman, the raker together and inventor I believe in many instances, of all the scandal – the filthier the better – of the district – to be spread far and wide.[122]

This clearly indicates that Mrs Mary Wilcox had entered the fray – either on her husband's behalf or because of other offences MacGillivray was supposed to have committed.

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[119] Chisolm, 'The story of the scrub-birds', 91. Chisolm notes that Ramsay had to edit Wilcox's notes as 'Wilcox did not write nearly as well as MacGillivray'.

[120] MacGillivray to Ramsey, 1 July – 21 July 1865, E.P. Ramsay - papers, being mainly correspondence relating to natural history, 1860-1912, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, MLMSS 563/3, microfilm CY2321.

[121] *Ibid*

[122] *Ibid.* In the 'Last letters' Iredale stops the letter at 'never to return' and does not include the remainder of the letter.

In the same letter MacGillivray mentioned the prospect of obtaining some pheasant eggs which would have required borrowing a horse from the household to about which he commented that he had 'long ceased to ask anything *here* as a favour'.[123]

MacGillivray informed Ramsay that his intention was to remain in the district for a short time based at a station at Urara.[124] He must have carried out this plan as Ramsay made his own journey to the region in search of further specimens of the elusive Rufous Scrub-bird arriving in Grafton on 13 September 1866. Twelve days later MacGillivray met him there and gave him advice regarding his expedition including a detailed map of the location where the original specimens had been obtained, but did not join him on the hunt. Ramsay published the official description of the species in the *Proceedings of the Zoological Society*, which was published the following year. Ramsay's specimen, now held in the Natural History Museum in London became the type for the species.[125] Ramsay's own attempt to secure more specimens of this elusive bird was, to some extent, successful. Although securing 17 specimens Ramsay failed, as did many after him, to secure a female specimen. It was not until 1920 that Sidney William Jackson finally obtained a female specimen after hunting for three months in the McPherson ranges in Queensland.

With Wilcox absent in Melbourne MacGillivray set about saying his farewells in the district. He delivered a final lecture at the School of Arts on 'Fragments of Voyages Round the World'. The Mayor presented him with a testimonial, embossed on parchment, from the committee. The *Examiner* reported that MacGillivray was visibly affected by the presentation and stated that he would bequeath the testimonial to his son.[126] It is unclear if the testimonial was ever delivered to John William MacGillivray however there is evidence that it was at least one of the very few remnants of MacGillivray's life that was retained within the MacGillivray family.[127] This note in a local newspaper is the one and only mention of his children that MacGillivray made following the death of his wife. MacGillivray wrote to Ramsay that the opportunity to sell the collections in Melbourne would provide the means for Wilcox and himself to settle up but that he was in no hurry and that the outcome of the sales would not affect him greatly.[128] In mid December he bid farewell to Grafton and Richmond Rivers district 'without the slightest expectation of ever returning to it' and travelled back to Sydney.[129]

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[123] *Ibid*

[124] *Ibid*

[125] Waterhouse's specimen is lost. It is believed that, not recognising it as a new species, he sent the bird labelled *clamosa* to the Paris Exhibition in 1866 and that it made its way from there into a foreign collection – perhaps forever mislabelled. A.H. Chisolm, 'The Story of the Scrub-birds Part II', *Emu*, 51 (1951): 291.

[126] *Clarence and Richmond Rivers Examiner,* 16 October 1866, 2.

[127] A letter from a Miss Belinda MacGillivray was received by the Clarence Regional Library in 1991 in which she states that 'We have in our family possession a certificate from Grafton School of Arts dated October 1866 a photo copy of which is enclosed. Could you advise me if there is any place in Grafton who would have any records back this far so that we could find out and trace some of the family history regarding this particular man'. I have so far been unable to locate Belinda MacGillivray.

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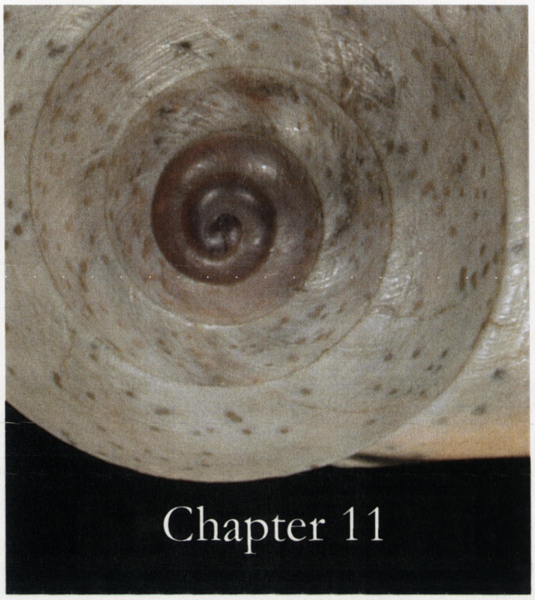
[128] MacGillivray to Ramsey, 1 July – 21 July 1865, E.P. Ramsay - papers, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, MLMSS 563/3, microfilm CY2321.

[129] Beaton, 'A Martyr to Science', 429.



Chapter 11

The bulls of Bashan
1867

During MacGillivray's first real natural history expedition to the island of St Kilda in the summer of 1840 when he was just nineteen years old, one of the local attractions he visited was a spring named *Tobir na h' oige* which issued from the face of a precipitous rock. The spring was extremely difficult to reach but MacGillivray clambered across to sample the waters, which were said to be a well of youth.

> As the water, to retain its efficacy, must be drunk upon the spot, it is no wonder that so few old persons have attempted the renewal of their youth by its means, although surprising effects are *said* to have been produced by it in former days. Having tasted of the waters of this modern "Fountain of Youth," I can answer for their goodness; but with respect to the probable longevity to be expected through their means, I can as yet say nothing.[1]

If MacGillivray's life is taken as a test case, quenching his thirst at *Tobir na h' oige* on the island of St Kilda could not be said to have lived up to expectations. The nineteen year old could not have foreseen the strange paths he was to travel and his eventual death in a land far from home, which would come only 26 years later.

The last short chapter of MacGillivray's life opens with a letter to Edward Pearson Ramsay dated 18 February 1867.[2] The letter is addressed from 'Dr Cox's'. On his return from Grafton MacGillivray had been engaged by his former employer, Dr James Cox, to prepare another publication based on Cox's extensive personal collection. This monograph was considerably more ambitious than the catalogue of 1864 and it is clear from his correspondence with Ramsay that MacGillivray's 'daily conchological exercises' took up most of his time and energy.[3] Only two letters survive from this last period of MacGillivray's life. Both are full of his thoughts regarding his work for Cox and, once that task was completed, his hopes regarding an exciting venture back to the north of Australia, the richest collecting ground of his career. This, or another excursion to the New Hebrides had, he stated, always been his intention on his return to Sydney.[4] MacGillivray's plans for this collecting trip to Cape York were well advanced but his letter advised Ramsay that it would take at least 2 months to complete his work for Cox to his own satisfaction 'that is to say, conscientiously as well as my ability goes'. He felt unable to leave the process before completion, 'Correcting' he stated 'as it passes through the press *must* be done by myself to ensure accuracy. I have thus explained so far my engagement with Dr. Cox, at least what I consider myself *morally* bound to do…'.[5]

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[1] John MacGillivray, 'Account of the island of St. Kilda, chiefly with reference to its natural history, from notes made during a visit in July, 1840'. *Edinb. New Phil. Journal*, Vol. xxxii. (1842): 47-70.

[2] MacGillivray to Ramsay, 18 February 1867, E.P. Ramsay - papers, being mainly correspondence relating to natural history, 1860-1912, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, MLMSS 563/3, microfilm CY2321.

[3] MacGillivray to Ramsay, 1 March 1867, E.P. Ramsay - papers, being mainly correspondence relating to natural history, 1860-1912, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, MLMSS 563/3, microfilm CY2321.

[4] Patrick Beaton, 'A Martyr to Science', *Good Words*, July (1868): 428.

The trip to Cape York was to be of at least a year's duration, MacGillivray hoped, perhaps two. In a letter to his brother in law the Reverend Beaton he explained that he would use vessels engaged in the beche-de-mer trade to make trips out to the islands of the Torres Strait.[6] Despite MacGillivray's feelings regarding his experience on board the *Julia Percy* he was still willing to make use of the island trade and its people in order to further his collecting activities. Captain Charles Edwards was still active in the Torres Strait as was the Captain of the *Julia Percy*, William Banner, so MacGillivray had contacts that he would easily be able to exploit.

MacGillivray was confident that the excursion would be a success and had undertaken to collect on behalf of a number of customers. He outlined these commitments to Ramsay in his letter of 1 March stating that he would collect a complete set of insects for Mr [William John] Macleay and a complete set of shells for Dr Cox. He had not made any arrangement with Cox to this effect but felt that he was duty bound to secure for him anything that he could – demonstrating that the two were on very good terms throughout MacGillivray's time in his employment. Adelaide Museum had supplied him with a list of their desired birds. This meant that he felt free to enter into an agreement with Ramsay regarding eggs and nests, of which he would 'get the first and best'.[7] He also agreed to supply Ramsay with bird skins. Adelaide Museum would get the first pair but Ramsay would have the second and MacGillivray stated that he felt confident, given the length of the visit, that he would be able to secure two pairs of each species. This was the full extent of his agreed commitments as he had decided not to collect plants. Von Mueller, he informed Ramsay, had made an offer regarding collecting on his behalf but, for some reason that MacGillivray did not specify, he had chosen to decline. Outfitting for the expedition, MacGillivray stated, would be expensive but he hoped that he would be able to obtain various things from a number of people and that everything else his brother Paul would be able to supply.[8] He advised Ramsay that an advance of £20 would greatly assist in preparations but they could speak more on that issue when they next met.

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[5] MacGillivray to Ramsay, 1 March 1867, E.P. Ramsay - papers, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, MLMSS 563/3, microfilm CY2321.

[6] Beaton, 'A Martyr to Science', 428.

[7] MacGillivray to Ramsay, 1 March 1867, E. P. Ramsay - papers, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, MLMSS 563/3, microfilm CY2321.

Despite the planning and excitement there was however the lingering discomfort of ill health. MacGillivray's letters to Ramsay contain a number of references to increasing health worries throughout his time in Grafton. These same worries were also present in letters to MacGillivray's brother-in-law to whom he mentions that he is doctoring himself successfully but that he had been carrying a cold for six or seven months. 'It is no use me trying to take care of myself' he wrote as he related his chase after a goose which involved plunging into mud and water and riding wet for the greater part of a day.[9] The pace of collecting meant that he continually put off a trip to Sydney to consult a doctor about his persistent health troubles.

When he arrived in Sydney he had returned to what he termed his 'attic retreat' in Cumberland street partly for desired solitude but also as it allowed him to open a window at night which he felt helped to keep his breathing problems at bay. Despite his excitement at his new collecting adventure and his worries about his health he was determined to finish his work for Cox. He wrote:

> 'I shall do it, if the asthma doesn't choke me meanwhile, or one of the wild bulls of Bashan (or the county of Cumberland) stick his horns into my gizzard and bring my carcass before the Coroner'. [10]

This was from the last known letter written by MacGillivray. His body was brought before the coroner just three months later. He died on 6 June 1867. He was 45 years old. His death certificate records his age as 'about 50' the place of death as Pitt Street and the cause as disease of the heart. His mother and father were recorded as 'unknown'.[11] A brief note regarding the death of this 'distinguished naturalist' of HMS *Rattlesnake* appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald.*[12] The paper recorded that after carrying out his duties on board the *Rattlesnake* in an 'able manner' he had returned to the colony to pursue his profession. He had been suffering for some months, the paper stated, from disease of the heart. No mention was made of HMS *Herald.* A small number of friends accompanied his body to its resting place in the Scotch Cemetery Necropolis. I can find no evidence that a headstone was ever erected. It was a lonely, sudden and sad end for a man who still had much to contribute to the world of Australian natural history.

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[8] *Ibid*

[9] Beaton, 'A Martyr to Science', 428.

[10] MacGillivray to Ramsay, 1 March 1867, E.P. Ramsay - papers, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, MLMSS 563/3, microfilm CY2321.

[11] John MacGillivray, Death certificate, no. 1867/001366.

[12] 'Death of Mr John MacGillivray, Late Naturalist of H.M.S. Rattlesnake', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 June 1867, 4.

When Ramsay heard of MacGillivray's death he dispatched James Gray to seek out MacGillivray's lodgings and see what he could discover regarding his effects. Gray reported his discoveries to Ramsay in a letter on 21 June.[13] In it he wrote that he had found that MacGillivray had lodged at two separate locations – curiously, he said, both run by a Mrs Miller but with no connection between them. At MacGillivray's Fort Street lodgings Gray found a box with his journal, a few papers and manuscripts as well as a flat box containing the embossed certificate presented to MacGillivray by the Grafton School of Arts committee.[14] At his other residence, on Cumberland Street, only a few papers were found and the proprietor, Mrs Miller told Gray that MacGillivray had died owing her three weeks board and rent. Gray then spoke to Mrs Macdonald, the keeper at the Forth and Clyde public house on Cumberland Street. This, Gray notes, was where 'Mac' spent his evenings. Mrs Macdonald complained to Gray that MacGillivray had given her a copy of his *Narrative of the Voyage of the Rattlesnake* 'but that he got the loan of it for a Mr Ramsay, but never returned it, and she would like much to have it'. A small note, perhaps from Ramsay, scribbled in the margins of the letter denies any knowledge of the loan. Although not mentioned in the letter, at some stage MacGillivray's gun also came into Ramsay's possession. At the time Iredale published MacGillivray's 'Last letters' he claimed it was in the possession of Ramsay's son, J.S.P. Ramsay. Another small note in the E.P. Ramsay correspondence indicates that the gun may later have been donated to the Australian Museum.[15]

Cox's *Monograph of Australian Land Shells* was published a year after MacGillivray's death. In the preface to the work the only acknowledgement that Cox gives to MacGillivray is, along with others, thanks for habitats given.[16] In his 'Last letters' article Iredale comments that 'it is a work of reference to this day. It is so unlike any of Cox's later work that it was obvious to the student that Cox alone had not prepared it'.[17] Even at the time of publication it is clear that others agreed with Iredale's assessment regarding the true contribution made by MacGillivray. Gerard Krefft, in the scathing attack on Cox contained in his 'autobiographical notes' stated that doctors often do not get as much opportunity as they might wish for their 'hobby horses' and that he supposed:

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[13] Gray to Ramsay, 21 June 1867, E.P. Ramsay - papers, being mainly correspondence relating to natural history, 1860-1912, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, MLMSS 563/3, microfilm CY2321.

[14] A letter to the Grafton Historical Society from a Belinda MacGillivray would indicate that this certificate is still in family hands. I have been unable to trace Belinda MacGillivray to confirm this.

[15] Susie Davies (formerly of the Macleay Museum) has asked John Ramsay about the gun but he has no memory of it.

[16] James Cox, *A monograph of Australian land shells* (Sydney: William Maddock, 1868).

[17] Tom Iredale, 'The last letters of John MacGillivray', *Australian Zoologist*, 9 (1937): 63.

> ...it was on this account that the Doctor employed "poor Mac" and that he now regrets that "dead men won't come back", because his descriptive pen has ceased to record the discovery of new empty shells except now and then in the pages of the Zoological Society's Proceedings, a publication not responsible for the opinions of (some of) its eccentric contributors, and let me record that since Mr. MacGillivray's death, Dr. Cox has dropped Latin and writes "his own", that is neither the Dean's nor the Queen's English.[18]

In a letter to the editor of *Nature* in 1874 Krefft stated that Cox had 'worked poor MacGillivray to death'.[19]

It was left to MacGillivray's brother in law, the Reverend Patrick Beaton, to write a longer obituary than the brief note contained in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. In 1868 Beaton wrote an article for *Good Words* 'A Martyr to Science'.[20] The article contained the only acknowledged sketch of MacGillivray and fragments from his correspondence with Beaton and Anne Dorothea. Beaton noted that family memories of MacGillivray showed that he 'was a wild, impulsive, warm-hearted lad, ready to lead others into mischief, ready, also, to bear more than his own share of the punishment.'[21] Beaton ended with the observation that 'Like most naturalists, he was enthusiastic, simple-minded, and unworldly, and his chequered life, with all its hardships and privations, was, on the whole, a happy one.'[22]

Another obituary was published in the *Clarence and Richmond Rivers Examiner*. This piece perhaps best captures the complexity of this remarkable man and is a reminder of the qualities that have since been forgotten:

> This gentleman, lately a resident amongst us, died on Thursday last, in Sydney. It is to be feared that his death was accelerated by indulgence, the temptation to which he could not always resist, but in spite of this weakness, he was a man of honor and

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[18] Gerard Krefft, *Autobiographical notes and report 1874*, National Library of Australia, MSS 3321.

[19] Gerard Krefft 'Letter to the editor of *Nature*, 20 March 1874. Extract from Krefft correspondence in Natural History Museum, London. Supplied by Julian Holland, September 2007.

[20] Beaton, 'A Martyr to Science', 425-429.

[21] *Ibid*, 425.

[22] *Ibid*, 429. Beaton's description did not perhaps do MacGillivray's reputation any favours. In his article on the life and travels of Joseph Beete Jukes, Robert Bayliss quotes it as a description of MacGillivray – omitting Beaton's 'like most naturalists' which makes MacGillivray look foolish rather than what I believe Beaton was implying which had more to do with someone who worked somewhat apart from the politics and intrigue, dedicated instead to life in the field. Robert Bayliss, 'The Travels of Joseph Beete Jukes, F.R.S.', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, 32, no.2 (1978): 201-12.

> veracity, a firm friend and a most amiable companion. His acquirements as a scientific naturalist were of the highest order, and accompanied by a remarkable absence of pretence or self-sufficiency … the minuteness and accuracy of his information on all subjects connected with his noble profession; his sly humor, always void of offence; his liberal spirit and strong sense made him a remarkable person. He had the cultivation of a scholar, and the heart of a gentleman. His one failing he shared with but too many: his merits were all his own.[23]

It is difficult now to imagine the way in which a collector such as John MacGillivray would have viewed the world. To see through such eyes would be to be constantly alert and searching. In a telling passage from a letter to a family friend, MacGillivray once complained that in train travel 'the dazzling of the eyes by our swiftly dashing past objects which I continually strain my eyes to see produced a most painful sensation from which I have just recovered'.[24] Unlike a casual gaze of admiration or even the careful inspection of an interested observer, MacGillivray's eyes were trained to seek, to find, and to analyse his environment in every detail and at every opportunity. His interests in zoology, ornithology, botany, ethnography and geology meant that his every sense would have been constantly engaged, alive, and every feature of the environment under constant scrutiny. The energy and enthusiasm that this scrutiny entailed is evident in every chapter of MacGillivray's career. The neglect of his contributions to the history of the development of natural science, particularly following his dismissal from HMS *Herald* in 1855, on the basis of a perception of lack of ability and drunkenness is regrettable. It is clear that following his dismissal MacGillivray's reputation, if not quite left in tatters, was certainly severely tarnished. His contributions were often discounted and the latter part of his career left shrouded in vagueness and mystery.

MacGillivray was more than a scientific visitor to the Antipodes – there came a point at which he decided never returned to Britain. This experience of dislocation and relocation is an important contributing factor to our understanding of his responses to the people, landscapes and environments throughout Australia and the Pacific. His attitudes evolved along with his status - he was first a visitor, later an expert and finally a resident. The different stages of his career mean that MacGillivray is also representative of each of the major streams of scientific collecting during the period. He worked as a private collector for celebrated individuals such as the Earl of Derby, Hugh Cuming and John Gould. He was a key participant in the tradition of naturalist voyagers attached to British surveying vessels, and is also representative of that class of collectors who struck out on their own, as agents roaming in search of profitable ventures, saleable items and personal fortunes. MacGillivray's life and collections therefore provide a unique insight into the mindset and experiences of a collector and naturalist in the nineteenth century.

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[23] 'Mr John MacGillivray', *Clarence and Richmond Rivers Examiner,* 11 June 1867, 2.

[24] MacGillivray to Harley (n.d.), Harley Correspondence, Leicester and Rutland Record Office, 13D56/7, f.42.

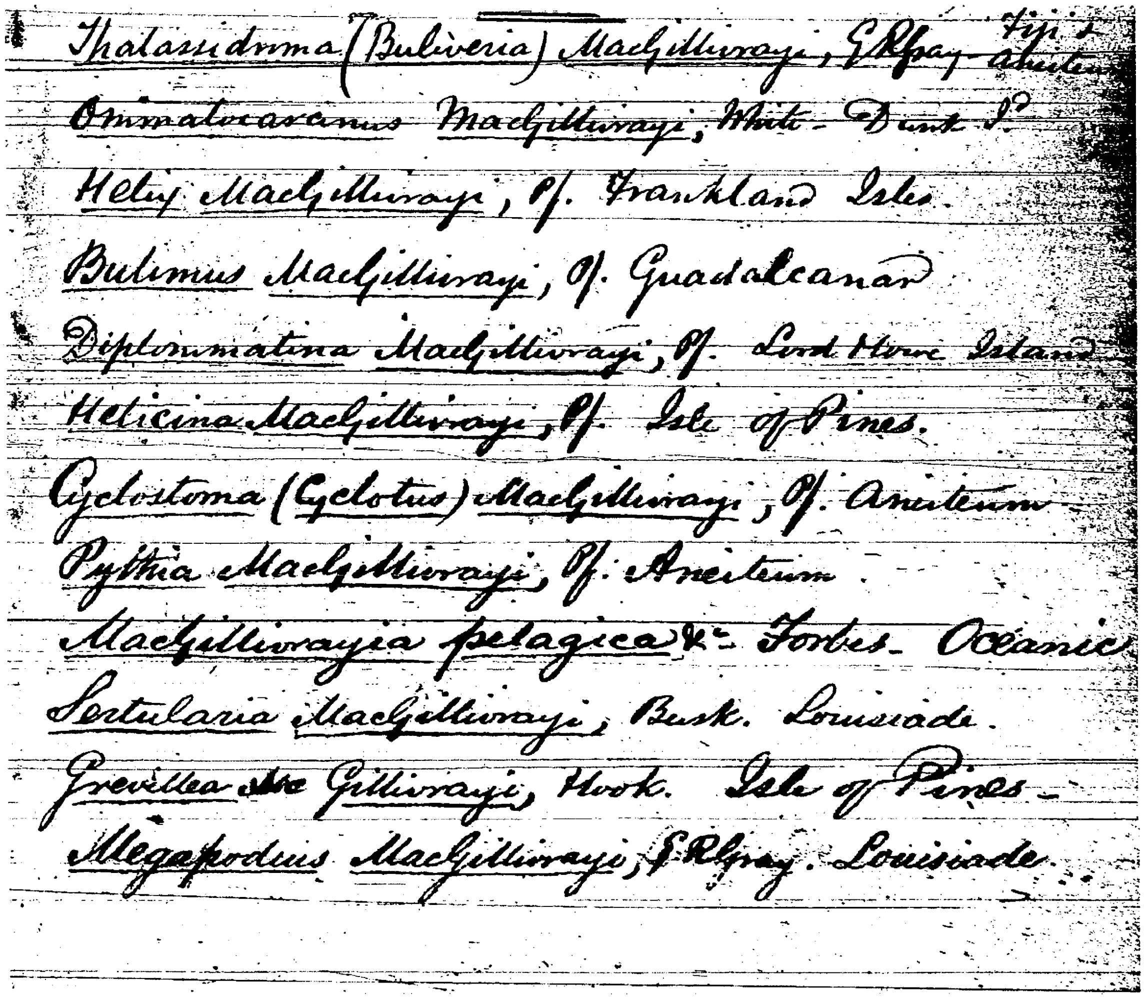
This thesis has shown that an analysis of MacGillivray's career, and in particular of the last twelve years of his career, offers significant insight into the history of natural history collecting and studies of colonial development and politics in Australia and the Pacific. In particular MacGillivray's activities along the Great Barrier Reef, in Vanuatu and in the Torres Strait as he operated alongside the sandalwood, beche-de-mer, tortoise and pearl shell industries has contributed valuable information regarding the way in which these industries operated, the people that were involved and the impact such industries had on local populations. The career of John MacGillivray has, I believe, provided a valuable case study of life on the fringes of empire in the nineteenth century. His journals, letters and publications offer a unique insight into the daily life of a collector operating outside the official networks established by the scientific elite and their associated institutions. This thesis has demonstrated the way in which men such as MacGillivray both exploited and extended the structures and frameworks established by the growth of empire in the antipodes.

In the course of this research a number of areas present themselves as being topics on which further work would be valuable. MacGillivray's anthropological and ethnographic activities are of particular interest. Related to this would be a closer examination of his relationships with particular individuals such as Nienmal and Paida. These interactions, taking place as they did during a volatile period in contact history could form the basis of a study into the range of collaborations that formed on the fringes of settler society throughout the nineteenth century. I hope this examination of MacGillivray will encourage and facilitate further investigations into his life and work.

In analysing MacGillivray's career, it is interesting that it is perhaps his failures rather than successes that are the most enlightening of his experiences. These crucial failures include his failure to make a career in science in England, his failure to enter into the scientific elite once based in Sydney and his failure to maintain relationships with various patrons, colleagues, authorities and institutions. Each of these provides evidence for the way in which he worked from a personal perspective, but also the way in which science was being practised and the complexities and politics that lay behind the development of natural sciences in the colonies. It is in his failure, his neglect and his silence that he serves best as a lens through which the social and scientific spheres he inhabited can be examined. He was a man of ability, not necessarily originality. He was informed, intelligent and knowledgeable without being brilliant. His inability to break free of the systems of natural history thought and collecting that had shaped his career and his outlook meant that he played, at most, a marginal role in the great scientific developments that surrounded him.

That said, however, what has been revealed in piecing together this account of John MacGillivray is that he was a man of steadfast determination and remarkable energy. He never lost his passion for natural history and for scientific collecting. There are points throughout his life when he might well have chosen different, more settled paths. In colonial Australia and in the islands of the south-west Pacific with all their potential for so capable a person in so many ways, he must have considered alternatives. However he never abandoned his pursuit of the next "novelty". Through all the troubles, many of his own making, this fixity of purpose, this true dedication, is perhaps the greatest surprise.

On the bottom of a page of his Natural History Notebook MacGillivray has carefully written out a list of the some of the species that bear his name. His list shows the pride he took in his work as one of the best collectors in extraordinary places and through tumultuous times. Despite the disappearance of MacGillivray Bluff, his name does live on. A coral reef carries his name. So too do a number of the animals and plants he brought to Science. He would find it fitting to have left his mark in this way, *macgillivrayi*.



Thalassidroma (Bulweria) MacGillivrayi, G.R.Gray. Fiji [illegible]
Ommatocarcinus MacGillivrayi, White. Dunk Id.
Helix MacGillivrayi, Pf. Frankland Isles.
Bulimus MacGillivrayi, Pf. Guadalcanar
Diplommatina MacGillivrayi, Pf. Lord Howe Island
Helicina MacGillivrayi, Pf. Isle of Pines.
Cyclostoma (Cyclotus) MacGillivrayi, Pf. Aneiteum –
Pythia MacGillivrayi, Pf. Aneiteum.
MacGillivrayia pelagica &c. Forbes. Oceanic
Sertularia MacGillivrayi, Busk. Louisiade.
Grevillea Mac Gillivrayi, Hook. Isle of Pines –
Megapodius MacGillivrayi, G.R.Gray. Louisiade.

Plate 30: List compiled by MacGillivray of some of the species bearing his name
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* A letter to the editor taking issue with comments MacGillivray makes regarding the bunyip appeared on 2 July 1856, 5. The letter is from Isaac Aaron. This is probably the Sydney medical practiionaer -
http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A010001b.htm?hilite=aaron

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